

**THE BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE**  
Our critics' choice  
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## AFTER THE AFFAIR

Who keeps the diamonds?

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## SPORTY TUBBIES

Don't blow the whistle on the fat boys

BRYANT'S EYE PAGE 45

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14-PAGE SPECIAL SECTION

## Robinson was accused of breaching exchange control rules

BY DOMINIC KENNEDY

GEOFFREY ROBINSON faced fresh embarrassment over his personal finances last night when it was disclosed that he was reported to the Bank of England in 1980 on suspicion of breaching exchange control regulations.

Mr Michael Edwards, then chairman of BL, is understood to have expressed concerns that Mr Robinson may have moved tens of thousands of pounds of personal money between Britain, Italy and Switzerland, when such movements were prohibited by James

Callaghan's Labour Government. By the time Sir Michael raised the issue with Sir Kit McMahon, then Deputy Governor of the Bank, however, the Conservatives had returned to power under Margaret Thatcher and abolished the exchange controls. The Bank declined to take the matter further.

Mr Robinson, who as Paymaster is now under fire over a multimillion pound offshore trust, joined British Leyland as financial controller in 1971, moving to Italy the following year as head of Innocenti, the company's Italian arm. He went on to run Jaguar for

two years before becoming Labour MP for Coventry in 1976.

When Sir Michael took over as BL chairman in 1977 and inherited Mr Robinson's three-inch thick personnel file, he found it contained a small section dealing with movements of money. Sir Michael was concerned that Leyland could be regarded as a party to any wrongdoing if it knew of allegations without reporting to the authorities and in 1979 he requested a meeting with the Bank.

Arthur Large, who became BL company secretary in 1979 and accompanied Sir Michael to

Threadneedle Street, said: "I have a fairly good recollection of it. To me it was quite an outing. The chairman and I had set up a meeting with Kit McMahon. It was in connection with a possible convention of exchange control regulations. There had been some movement of funds. We shared with the Deputy Governor the information that we had."

Under the exchange controls, Britons were allowed to take only small amounts of sterling outside the UK and to invest abroad incurred punitive exchange rates. British expatriates were entitled to

be paid abroad, but had to spend their earnings in that country or return it to Britain: they were not allowed to transfer it to a third country. Mr Robinson, who lived in Italy at the time, was thought to have moved money between Italy, Britain and Switzerland.

Mr Large said the meeting had concerned only Mr Robinson and the three had discussed whether the Bank would take any action.

"My recollection is that they declined to do so. They were at that stage unwilling to take it further for whatever reason."

Sir Michael also confirmed yes-

terday that he and Mr Large had visited the Bank. "The meeting was arranged at my request, some months after exchange control was abolished. Matters discussed were as confidential then and, as far as I am concerned, remain so."

At the time of the meeting, Mr Robinson had become something of a thorn in Sir Michael's side and recalling the dismissal of the convener Derek "Red Robbo" Robinson in his 1982 autobiography, *Back from the Brink*, Sir Michael wrote: "There was far less heat being generated internally than by non-BL people... like Geoffrey

Robinson MP... and one or two others who felt that the whole union system was at risk."

The latest disclosure about the Paymaster General came as the Prime Minister again rejected Tory demands that the minister resign over his personal financial arrangements.

William Hague led a concerted attack on Mr Robinson, saying there was a conflict of interest between his offshore financial interests and his duties as a Treasury

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## Blair stands firm on plan for welfare

BY PHILIP WEBSTER AND JILL SHERMAN

TONY BLAIR told Labour MPs yesterday that internal revolts and fear of unpopularity would not deflect him from reforming the welfare state.

He warned those upset by the cut in benefits for single mothers that there would be still harder decisions to come, and he attacked MPs who handed propaganda gifts to the Tories.

"I always said that education and welfare reform would be the big projects of this government. On education we are delivering. On welfare reform we must deliver, too. There is no backing down. It is essential." And he added: "What we did last week will not be the hardest issue we face in this Parliament."

But the wounds of the rebellion — when 47 Labour MPs voted against the Government — were again laid bare when Clive Soley, chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, criticised the Government's handling of the change saying that it "made the whole policy look just like another Thatcherite cut". The Government's honeymoon had finally ended with the revolt, he wrote in an article for the *New Statesman*.

He has since been discussing with Mr Blair ways of improving consultation with MPs so that their views are taken on board before sensitive decisions are made.

In his address to the PLP yesterday morning, the Prime Minister implicitly accepted that future changes would have to be better handled if he were to win support, and he took a conciliatory line towards some of his critics, saying there was room in any party for "criticism, conscience and dissent".

For their part, MPs raised

their concerns over the cuts and pleaded not to have to go through the same agony again: Tony Benn led calls for the Government to think twice before cutting benefits for disabled people.

The Prime Minister's soothing tone did not, however, detract from his central message — that his determination to shake up the welfare state is uncompromising.

He would always listen to people, but governments had to govern. "It is about choices and some of those choices are indeed tough choices to make. But they have to be made. Opposition MPs can always say Yes or Maybe at the very least. In government you have to learn sometimes to say No. Opposition MPs can blame everything on the Government. Government MPs must explain what the Government is doing and why."

Mr Blair added: "I will listen to criticism. I have listened carefully to criticism in recent days. There has to be room in any party for criticism, for conscience, dissent."

"Constructive criticism is one thing. But it should never be made in such a way that it merely provides gifts to our political enemies, or repeats their propaganda about broken promises, when we have been broken, or accuses us of

ensuring that only those who need the benefit claim it."

Today Harriet Harman will face demands from Lord Ashley and members of the all-party disablement group to call a halt to any cuts for the disabled. But Ms Harman is expected to discuss plans to get more people off incapacity benefit and back into work.

The numbers of long-term sick claiming benefit have soared to two million, in spite of more rigorous medical checks and Ms Harman is said to be determined to ensure that only those who need the benefit claim it.

Blair's approval ratings have fallen from their previous sky-high levels. His net rating, satisfied minus dissatisfied, has dropped from plus 50 to plus 34 points over the past three weeks. His net rating is now plus 73 points, a record for any new Prime Minister.

MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,122 adults at 169 sampling points across Britain on December 12 to 15. Data were weighted to match the profile of the population. Voting intention figures exclude those who would not vote (9 per cent), were undecided (4 per cent) or refused to say (1 per cent).

The Labour lead remains at near record levels for this period after an election. Labour is now on 55 per cent, down just one point since late November, with the Tories two points up at 26 per cent. The Liberal Democrats are one point down at 15 per cent.

This tiny narrowing in the Labour lead, from 32 to 29 points, has occurred despite a big drop in the Government's approval rating. The index measuring those satisfied minus those dissatisfied with the way the Government is running the country has dropped from plus 24 points to just plus five points. Similarly, Mr

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### Warning to GPs about chicken flu

Doctors in Britain have been asked to look out for cases of chicken flu, the new form of the disease which has already affected two people in Hong Kong.

The Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, has written to all GPs about the virus, which is called H5N1 and was previously confined to birds.

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## IRA bombers are allowed home for Christmas

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

THREE top IRA bombers, each a high-risk prisoner serving multiple life sentences at the Maze prison outside Belfast, are for the first time being allowed home for Christmas and the New Year to the dismay of their victims' relatives.

Patrick Magee, who planted the Brighton bomb that nearly killed Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet in 1984, has just been granted ten days' leave beginning next Tuesday.

Magee, 46, was branded "a man of exceptional cruelty and inhumanity" by the Old Bailey judge who in 1986 gave him eight life sentences with a recommended minimum of 35 years.

Also being allowed home are Paul Kavanagh and Thomas Quigley, both 41, who conducted a month-long London terror campaign in 1981, including the Chelsea barracks bomb that killed two Guards and injured many Irish Guards, a booby-trapped bomb in an Oxford Street Wimpy bar that killed a bomb-disposal expert and the bombing of the Wimbledon home of Sir Michael Havers, then the Attorney-General.

"You showed not a spark of compassion," said another Old Bailey judge as he gave the pair five life sentences each in 1985.

The three men are the most infamous of the 160 republican and loyalist paramilitary prisoners — more than a third of the Maze's population — who have qualified for the Northern Ireland Prison Service's unique Christmas leave

scheme this year. Sir Donald MacLean, whose wife Muriel died in the Brighton bomb, said the men had chosen terrorism, were among the worst of the criminal fraternity and deserved no leniency.

"They are getting the concession of enjoying Christmas with their families but my wife has not been given that chance. My family has not been given the chance of seeing their mother, and their children have been denied the chance of knowing their grandmother," he said.

Andrew Mackay, the Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, said he was "frankly surprised that such hardened terrorists with appalling records and life sentences are being allowed home for Christmas. The public will find it difficult to understand how people with their track record should be allowed a Christmas with their families denied to their innocent victims."

Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist Party's security spokesman, said it was "unseemly that the leadership and top activists of the IRA are subject to exactly the same criteria as the lesser criminals of the terrorist fraternity".

The prison service argues that its home leave schemes help inmates maintain family links and so reduce the chances of them re-offending when eventually released.

Adam Ingram, Northern Ireland security minister, said no prisoner was allowed home without a "rigorous risk assessment".

Christmas Opening Hours  
Monday to Friday 9.30am to 6.00pm  
Saturday 10.00am to 6.00pm Sunday 12.00 to 5.00pm

Continued on page 2, col 4

With a shaken Fiona Jenkins by his side and a puzzled party chairman Lord Parkinson waiting in the foyer to greet them, the couple were driven round The Mall to give them time to regain their poise.

The three women — one a blonde, one a brunette and one black — had lain in wait for the unsuspecting couple for almost an hour as leading

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## Icy smiles as one honeymoon ends and another begins

Festive shin-kicking dominated Prime Minister's Questions yesterday. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were anxious to demonstrate Christmas spirit to the nation — without missing their final chance in 1997 to be horrid to each other. They tried to do both. The effect was grotesque.

William Hague started with a shin-kick. How did Tony Blair square his Paymaster General's oversight of taxation with his position as a beneficiary of offshore trusts? Was Geoffrey Robinson "entirely detached?"

Mr Blair adopted an infuri-

ating smile and an air of relentless goodwill, rather like one of those Jehovah's Witness callers whose expression of infinite compassion — "forgive them for they know not what they do" — grows more serene with every door slammed in his face. His reward is in Heaven.

"If I may unite the House," he cooed, "by offering our very heartfelt congratulations to the Rt hon gentleman for the celebrations on Friday at his wedding; and, on behalf of all of us, wish him and his fiance a very happy life thereafter." Blair then turned to Hague's question, adopting the slightly

wounded tone of a toastmaster heckled at a wedding. He defended Mr Robinson.

"May I thank the Rt hon gentleman very much for his kind words," replied Hague, through gritted teeth. "Memories had been very kind to my fiancee and me," he said, turning to the Chair: "and I am delighted, Madam Speaker, that you will be joining us on our wedding."

Now it was Blair who was

grinding his teeth.

"He will forgive me," added Hague in that determined chuckle he makes his own, "for suggesting that just as his honeymoon is coming to an end, mine is about to begin."

"Normal hostilities will now resume," Chuckle. The Tory Leader repeated his question about Mr Robinson, hitting "entirely detached" with heavy sarcasm.

Blair's smile was ice. "The

marriage *this* party enjoyed with the electorate, we intend to continue at the next election." Tony Blair joins Queen Elizabeth I, the Emperor Hirohito and God in that select group of opinion-formers who believe themselves married to their people.

He repeated his support for Robinson, adding that it was "good that we have highly successful people" in the Government — news received with a rather muted cheer from the humble backbenchers behind, most of them some £30 million poorer than Mr Robinson and all of them without office.

The Robinson row split

tered on through PM's Questions, the seasonal joy being, mercifully, at an end. Mr Blair tried again to impress MPs with the importance of having rich people in Government, and was cheered just as feebly the second time.

But the Tories could not quite make their Robinson question stick. Blair was much assisted by Tory backbenchers' complete inability to ask a question succinctly.

Each was so determined to load his enquiry with clever remarks and damning side-swipes that the Prime Minister got away with replying to each (in so many words) "don't

be absurd."

Near the end

came an act of near-kamikaze courage — or folly. Robert Wareing (Lab, Liverpool W Derby) told Blair how wrong he was to think money was better spent on the Millennium Dome than on the disabled.

To attack your Prime Minister is bold. To attack Peter Mandelson too, is careless.

As I write, three succeeding contributions to the Commons' debate announced on my TV monitor, have come from "Mr Blizzard", "Mrs Humble" and (the debate is on Fisheries) "Mr Gill".

By PHILIP WEBSTER  
POLITICAL EDITOR

**Minister hints at package of help for hill farmers**

JACK CUNNINGHAM hinted strongly yesterday that a package of help for hard-pressed hill farmers would be announced within days.

But the Agriculture Minister warned that the whole beef industry would have to be restructured over the next few years as part of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Although he said it was not a "done deal", Dr Cunningham, with strong backing from Donald Dewar and Ron Davies, the Scottish and Welsh secretaries, Dr Cunningham is close to winning agreement from Gordon Brown for extra financial aid for the industry.

It will be targeted on hill farmers in the so-called "less favoured areas". Dr Cunningham said they were not "fat cat farmers" and their average net income this year was some £6,500. If they were not getting subsidy they would go bust, he said.

But he dismissed suggestions that a large sum of money was available from the European Union.

Of the £980 million which some claimed was available from Brussels, some £335m would have to come from the Exchequer because of rules negotiated by the Thatcher government. He could hardly go to Mr Brown for such a big sum today.

Dr Cunningham suggested the restructuring would have to be part of CAP reform, but he went on: "We have to move to world market prices. Potatoes, pigs and poultry operate in a world market without subsidy and they compete. Cereals, milk and beef live in a different kind of world." There was huge support from the CAP but that was not still not enough to make them profitable.

"We spend £30 billion on the CAP and end up inflicting farmers, consumer and taxpayers. You have to be pretty bloody stupid to spend that kind of money and end up annoying everybody."

The single biggest problem for farmers was the ban, the inability to sell their products on the international market and that was why they had to work hard to get it lifted.

The minister rejected reports of a rift with European partners over new regulations to ban beef imports which do not conform to the UK's anti-BSE standards. The minister who returned from Brussels after two days of meetings last night insisted relations had been "amicable and good natured." He dismissed claims that some countries wanted to see legal action brought against Britain and said the Commission had today confirmed that the unilateral ban was within EU law. Dr Cunningham said reports that Germany's farm minister Jochen Borchert had been especially critical were ill-placed. He said he enjoyed perfectly cordial relations with Mr Borchert, and had exchanged Christmas greetings with him last night.

## Labour protests force Hague to reshuffle team

By JAMES LANDALE  
POLITICAL REPORTER



WILLIAM HAGUE was forced to reshuffle his frontbench team last night after Labour protested at a shadow minister's links to a chain of nursing homes which they claimed paid low wages.

Michael Fallon was removed from his job as Shadow Trade and Industry Minister after Labour claimed he could have a potential conflict of interest with the Bill to set up a minimum wage.

Mr Fallon was switched to the Treasury frontbench team. Tim Boswell, MP for Daventry, moved from his Treasury post to replace Mr Fallon.

Mr Fallon, MP for Sevenoaks, was about to be appointed to the Commons committee considering the Minimum Wage Bill which received its second reading on Tuesday night.

However, according to the Register of Members' Interests, Mr Fallon is a paid adviser to Tamaris, a company which manages a chain of nursing homes called Quality Care Homes. Mr Fallon resigned as a paid director of Quality Care last June, but retains his shares in the firm.

In a point of order yesterday, Denis MacShane, Labour MP for Rotherham, told

Fallon: removed after conflict of interest claim

the Speaker that Mr Fallon had failed to declare his interest in the firm during his Commons speech on the Minimum Wage Bill on Tuesday night. Mr MacShane claimed that the company paid some employees about £3 an hour.

He told Miss Boothroyd: "I must ask you to investigate this, because despite being invited to declare it last night, there was an arrogant refusal to accept that he has a direct financial interest in rejecting this law and keeping wages as low as possible from which he will draw financial benefit."

The Speaker told him: "All members with a financial interest in the debate, when speaking in the House are required to declare that interest at the very beginning of the

employees." She added that the matter could be referred to Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner.

Philip Scott, managing director of Quality Care Homes, said last night that most employees were paid about £4 but admitted: "I know that we have some people below £3.50."

Mr Fallon said last night that he had been advised by the clerks that he did not have to declare an interest on a Bill concerning general public policy. But he added: "This move has been made to avoid Labour pursuing this particular issue in committee."

"Labour could have tabled amendments relating to nursing homes, and to avoid that potentiality arising in the detailed consideration of the Bill, the move has been made."

Mr MacShane confirmed

that he intends to ask Sir Gordon Downey to investigate.

"The Tory virus of sleaze has not been eradicated. A frontbench spokesman who is a paid adviser to a low-pay employer should not have been allowed within a million miles of a Minimum Wage Bill. Moving him to the Treasury frontbench will make matters worse. He will be now be hounded by Labour MPs who are concerned about low pay."

Mr Hague's Shadow Cabinet also managed to tease him last night by

## FO official to take over at GCHQ

By MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

A senior Foreign Office official is to be the next Director of the Government Communications Headquarters, the signals intelligence centre in Cheltenham.

In line with the previous Government's policy of naming the heads of the intelligence services, Downing Street announced that Kevin Tebbit, currently a deputy under-secretary at the Foreign Office, would take over at GCHQ next month.

Mr Tebbit was regarded as the ideal Whitehall candidate because his current job involves responsibility for defence and intelligence. He is the most senior link man at official level between the Foreign Office and the two services that come under the Foreign Secretary's remit, GCHQ and MI6.

## Blair sees Ulster progress in new year

By MARTIN FLETCHER

TONY BLAIR admitted frustration with the slow pace of the Northern Ireland peace talks last night, but insisted he remained "cautiously optimistic" that progress would be made in the new year.

The Prime Minister, was speaking after the parties left Stormont for the holiday having failed to agree an agenda. Mr Blair said the differences between the two sides were less than they appeared. "One of the most frustrating things is whenever you talk to people outside the political process, they seem to have a pretty clear understanding of what needs to be done."

Mr Blair did not attempt a walkabout in Belfast. Last time, loyalists shouted angrily at him for shaking Gerry Adams's hand. Yesterday he spoke to six formatters at the new Waterfront Hall, visited a police station and attended a carol service at an integrated school.

Mr Tebbit who was educated at Cambridge High School for Boys and St John's College Cambridge, will succeed David Ormand who, after only 18 months as director, has been promoted to permanent secretary at the Home Office.

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## Robinson was accused of breaking currency rules

Continued from page 1

minister. "Isn't it time he did the honourable thing and resigned?" Mr Hague asked.

But Tony Blair insisted that Mr Robinson had abided by the ministerial code. He said: "I think that it is good that we have people who are highly successful business people, who come and work for the Government. He is doing an excellent job there for the country without even taking a ministerial salary."

Mr Hague persisted: "The Paymaster General has £12 million in offshore trusts. He has admitted to having influence over those trusts. By what twist of logic have you come to be satisfied that Mr Robinson is entirely detached from decisions on these matters?" He asked whether it was time for the Paymaster General to "become detached from ministerial office."

An irritated Mr Blair replied: "The short answer is no. I don't accept that at all. He has not avoided UK tax. He has paid probably more UK tax than either me or you."

Mr Hague's attacks on Mr

Robinson signalled the start of a barrage of questions from the Tory back benches.

Damian Green, MP for Ashford, said: "Why are you clinging to this minister who is doing nothing but sullying the reputation of your Government?" Mr Blair told him: "As has been accepted by the Conservatives throughout, there is not even the allegation that Geoffrey Robinson has done."

Labour MPs jeered as Tim Loughton, MP for Worthing

East and Shoreham, asked the final question about Mr Robinson and cheered as Mr Blair rounded on the Tories for their "little exhibition". He said: "The check of that is there. We remember your record all through the past few years... for you to shield yourselves in the robes of financial probity is a joke. It is seen as a joke, it is regarded as a joke, you have no credibility whatsoever."

Diary, page 20

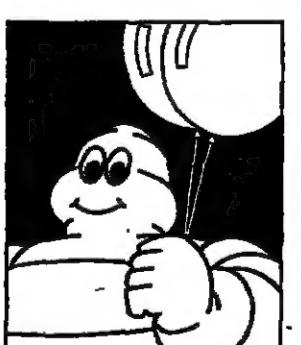
## Warning on quotas to protect fish stocks

By MICHAEL HORNSEY

BRITAIN'S most profitable trawlers were told yesterday to cut their fishing capacity by up to 36 per cent over the next four years to protect depleted stocks.

Elliot Morley, the Fisheries Minister, said that, if trawlers did not co-operate, the Government would have to restrict the days they spent at sea or to declare some waters closed to fishing. The good news, Mr Morley said, was that most of the British fleet did not face any further cuts because the European Commission now accepted that Britain was broadly meeting its reduction targets.

Mr Morley, speaking in a Commons debate on the eve of annual negotiations in Brussels to fix catch quotas, said the Government had secured a agreement on technical changes to the way fleet capacity was measured, which meant most of the British fleet would escape further cuts.



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# MCC opens the door for election of women members



The club was founded in 1787

After 200 years, fair play wins the day at the world's most renowned cricket club, write Ivo Tennant and Damian Whitworth

AFTER more than two centuries of excluding women, the committee of MCC has decided that such behaviour is just not cricket.

The most renowned cricket club in the world has long had a reputation for fair play both on and off the field. Only in the way it has turned down the appeals of female players and spectators to join the club has it been accused by some of being unsporting. Now by a large majority, the committee has recommended that women become eligible for election as members.

Current members will be able to vote at a special general meeting at Lord's on February 24.

The issue has been a vexed one for several years. The committee, which includes distinguished former cricketers in Ted Dexter and Tony Lewis, as well as other prominent individuals such as Lord Alexander of Weeton and Sir Tim Rice, admitted yesterday that it was concerned at being regarded in some quarters as "an old-fashioned male preserve".

When the Marylebone Cricket

Club was founded in 1787, the election of female members was not countenanced. The rules did not explicitly exclude women, other than not allowing them into the pavilion, but the regulations were drawn up on the assumption that it was a gentlemen's club. A two-thirds majority of members who vote in February will be required to overturn this.

MCC's committee believes that if women are to become eligible for election, there should no longer be any reason to ban them from the

Long Room, although there will be practical considerations to take into account: it is likely that a ladies' playing section would be created, as is the case in other sports clubs.

In a letter sent to the 17,500 members (average age 57) by Colin Ingleby-Mackenzie, president of MCC, the committee states: "It does not believe that the question of the admission or otherwise of ladies should be decided on the criterion of the club's public image alone. Other factors should be considered such as the advantages

of adopting the general membership policy of other cricket clubs and thereby strengthening MCC's links with them; and the wider opportunities for corporate and public sponsorships which would almost certainly result from lady membership."

When the committee considered the possibility of redeveloping the Grand Stand in 1995, an application for funding was made to the National Lottery. Of the reasons given for rejecting this, the exclusion of women members was one.

CHRIS BON



Children given an unexpected day off from school making the most of the snow at Cotham Gardens, Bristol. It is expected to thaw quickly today.

BY PETER FOSTER, NICK NUTTALL AND SIMON DE BRUNELLES

BOOKMAKERS, stranded motorists and snowballing children were all suffering from cold feet yesterday as heavy snowfalls swept across the country, shutting hundreds of schools and causing chaos on the roads.

The bookmakers responded to the Siberian conditions by cutting the odds on a white Christmas from 4/1 to 2/1, despite forecasters' predictions that warmer weather was on the way.

William Hill, who stand to lose up to £250,000 on a white Christmas, said they were still smarting from last year's record payout: "We are not taking any chances. Last year the Met Office assured us it would not snow in London on Christmas day, but it did," a spokesman said.

The forecasters had more success yesterday, predicting that snow would arrive in London at 8am, which it did. Longer range forecasts, which include Christmas Day, will not be available until later in the week.

Throughout yesterday morning, police reported scores of minor road accidents

as southwestern Britain slipped and滑倒ed into way to work. A woman was seriously injured in a crash between a car and a lorry on the A48 near Cross Hands, Carmarthenshire, and there was a 10-vehicle pile-up on the Exeter to Plymouth section of the A38.

Morning flights from Cardiff airport were cancelled because of drifting snow on the main runway and a 30mph limit was imposed on sections of the M4 between Cardiff and Swansea.

In Cornwall and South Wales, where more than 400 schools were closed, children made the most of the first major snowfall of the winter and went sledging and snowballing.

Motoring organisations reported that emergency calls had more than quadrupled as motorists ignored warnings and set off to work in the arctic conditions without antifreeze in their engines. Some rail services were also temporarily suspended, including the main Plymouth-Exeter line.

The dense band of snow, which drifted up to six feet deep on higher ground, moved

steadily northwards throughout the day, carpeting most of England by nightfall. Temperatures struggled to rise above freezing at any point during the day and, according to the London Weather Centre, the wind chill factor made it feel as cold as -10C.

Across the country several roads, particularly minor

ones, were closed as councils struggled to spread enough grit and salt to keep everyone on the move. Major routes, including sections of the M5, M4 and the main A27 Brighton bypass, were brought to a standstill, as was the southern half of the Isle of Wight. In Portsmouth, four inches of snow fell in five hours; the

city's first serious snowfall for ten years. Later in the day, as the snow reached North Wales and northern England, several roads were closed in Powys and across the Pennines. The Humber bridge, the Ouse bridge and elevated sections of the M62 were closed to high-sided vehicles as winds gusted to 50mph.

Water companies urged the managers of schools, factories, public buildings and offices to keep a minimum level of heating on over the Christmas period to reduce the risk of burst pipes and the threat of drought next year. They are also asking the Government to put pressure on councils to fit leak detection and automatic

supply shut down devices on pipes especially in schools. Airlines were gearing up to meet the rush of winter passengers anxious to escape to sunnier regions for the Christmas break. Thailand, the Caribbean and Kenya are among the most popular destinations.

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## Nurse wins cash for theatre assault

BY A CORRESPONDENT

A NURSE who was assaulted by a consultant during an operation was awarded £7,500 in damages yesterday.

Theatre sister, Andrea Sefton, 46, sued consultant anaesthetist Pravin Kotac and Bury Health Care NHS Trust, in Greater Manchester, for emotional injury and harassment that she suffered following the attack in which she was raped three times on the head.

Miss Sefton claimed at Clerkenwell Court, London, that when she complained to her bosses about the assault her duties were switched to packing medical trays in a backroom. The award was made in an out-of-court settlement.

The assault happened at Fairfield General Hospital in Bury in November 1993 after Mr Kotac, the hospital's Medical Executive Director, had asked Miss Sefton to pass him an instrument during an operation.

"Before I could turn round I felt his knuckles hit my head three times," said Miss Sefton. "After we had dealt with the patient another theatre sister and myself approached Mr Kotac and I asked him not to hit me again. He went totally ballistic and started shouting at me."

Mr Kotac was unavailable for comment.

## Police listened as women were killed with chisel

BY PAUL WILKINSON

POLICE listened helplessly on the telephone as a killer used a chisel to torture his girlfriend and her mother to death. The cries for mercy of Evelyn Oxtoby and her daughter Lynn were recorded 20 miles away by control-room officers who had taken her 999 call.

By the time police arrived the two women were lying dead in the snow outside their home where they had fled to escape the frenzy of blows struck by Robert Rich, 50.

Yesterday he began a double life sentence for the killing, provoked, Sheffield Crown Court was told, because he was tormented by the belief that Lynn Oxtoby, 30, was cheating on him.

During his six-day trial the jury heard the tape of Mrs Oxtoby's emergency call from the home they all shared in Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

In it she is heard saying: "There is man going mad in my house. Please Bob, don't. She loves you. She loves you."

Rich's mother, Doris, 73, burst into tears in the public gallery when the jury returned their verdicts. But outside Mrs Oxtoby's sister Claudette, 61, said: "We're pleased with the outcome. I hope he rots in hell."

The court had been told that Rich, who denied murder, had developed a personality disorder, manifesting itself in



Lynn Oxtoby: she was tortured to death

## Bus driver must pay £5,000 for assault

BY A CORRESPONDENT

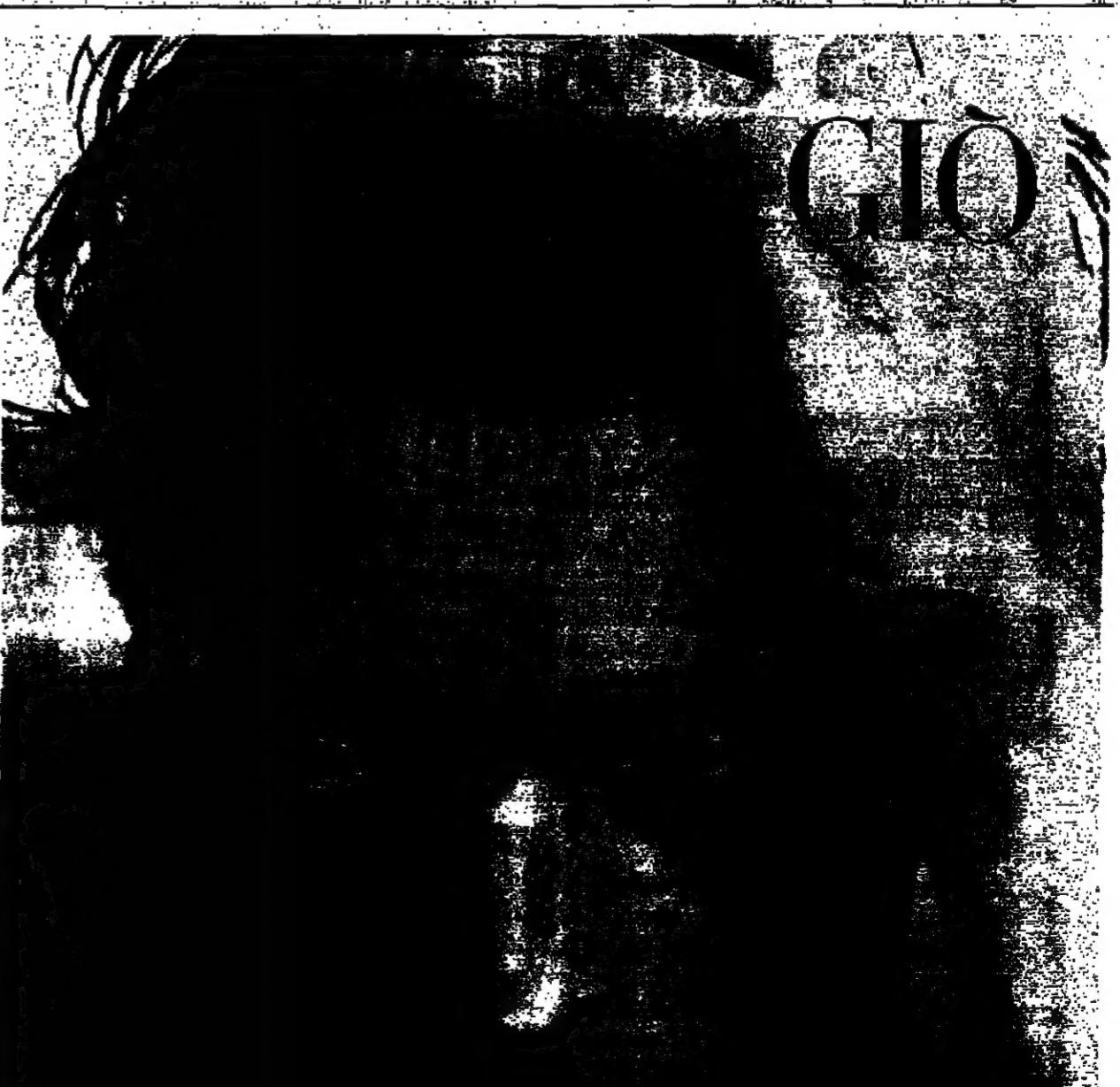
A BUS driver who threw a 70-year-old passenger off his vehicle, leaving him unable to walk, was yesterday ordered to pay £5,000 compensation.

However, even though Eric Stewart recently received a shamed windfall of more than £20,000, he claimed he could not pay compensation because he had spent all the money.

Thomas Valentine landed in a concrete flower bed after he was assaulted. He needed surgery to a leg and nearly died after complications during the operation.

Dundee Sheriff Court was told Stewart, a worker-shareholder of the Travel Dundee bus company, received more than £20,000 when the company was taken over by West Midlands Buses. But George Donnelly, Stewart's solicitor, said he could not pay the compensation. He had gone on holiday in Florida, redecorated the house and bought a car with the cash.

Sheriff Richard Davidson said that, for no obvious reason, Stewart had picked on the passenger and nearly killed him. Specifying the compensation, he said: "This elderly gentleman's remaining days must be made comfortable. If you have to walk around because you can no longer afford a car, then that is tough."



## Police chief stole from Harrods

BY DAMIAN WHITWORTH

A CHIEF of police from Azerbaijan and his wife stole goods worth £1,000 from Harrods when they came to Britain to board their 14-year-old son into an Oxford

boarding school.

Yesterday Khosrov Chamieva, 37, and Rena, 40, a teacher, who had denied the thefts, were fined £2,000 each at Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court, central London. The wealthy couple took more than 50 items, including scarves worth £149 each, pens, purses and designer sunglasses. They had \$10,000 (£6,135) in cash and more than £600

sterling with them during the 45-minute thefts.

The court was shown an hour-long video of the couple's visit to the store and the goods, with security tags missing, were laid out on tables. The couple, who spoke through an interpreter, came to England for a ten-day trip in September. They spent the night in police cells after being arrested on the eve of their return flight to Russia.

Mr Chamieva denied stealing a £107 pair of Ray-Ban sunglasses and a letter opener and his wife denied stealing the rest of a £1,082 haul. Astor detective, Christopher Ryemill, told the court that

the couple were walking around the store separately during their visit but met on several occasions and that on one occasion Mrs Chamieva paid for an item before confirming to steal. She later claimed to police that she was intending to pay for everything in one go after selecting what she wanted.

At one stage Mr Chamieva passed his wife a pair of sunglasses. She placed them into her pocket before passing them back to her husband, after dropping the price ticket to the floor. Mr Chamieva was stopped after setting off an anti-theft alarm as he was about to leave the Knightsbridge store.

## Women warned of minicab danger

BY KATHRYN KNIGHT

POLICE yesterday issued a warning about using unlicensed minicab drivers over Christmas and the new year after a woman was raped after leaving a party.

The attack is the 66th sex attack by men posing as minicab drivers in London alone in the last year. Officers now fear rogue drivers may be targeting late-night partygoers over Christmas as the shortage of licensed cabs due to increased demand tempts women to use street touts.

The latest victim, aged 22, climbed into a car which approached her as she walked to get a late-night snack on her way home from a party in Battersea, southwest London on December 7.

She fell asleep and awoke at a petrol station to discover she was locked in with her seat fully reclined and her seat belt fastened. She was then driven to a back street and raped. The terrified woman made her escape after the driver dropped her nearby.

Scotland Yard yesterday appealed for any other women approached in similar circumstances by drivers to come forward, among fears that the latest figures conceal the full extent of the problem.

Detective Superintendent Bill Grahamshaw, who heads the unit which tackles sex crime in London, said he was very concerned about the number of attacks, which had increased.

## Suspended Labour MP appears in court

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

MOHAMMED SARWAR, the suspended Labour MP for Glasgow Govan, appeared in court for the first time yesterday to face charges of election fraud, attempting to pervert the course of justice and breaking the law on his election expenses.

The 45-year-old MP appeared in private at Glasgow Sheriff Court before Sheriff Charles MacFarlane and Procurator Fiscal Barry Dickson. He made no plea or declaration and was released on bail.

After the hearing Mr Sarwar issued a statement in which he said: "I reaffirm that I have done nothing wrong and I maintain that I am innocent of all charges." He said he had no intention of resigning but would not make his maiden speech to the House of Commons tomorrow as planned.

Under Scottish law, the Crown now has up to a year to draw up detailed charges, if any, against Mr Sarwar and take the case to court. Mr Sarwar could face a fine or jail if he is found guilty of charges of fraud in relation to the late registration of voters.

The millionaire cash and carry businessman, became Britain's first Muslim MP on May 1 and was the first MP ever to swear an oath to the House on the Koran.



Mohammed Sarwar after his court appearance in private in Glasgow yesterday

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## Doctors warned to be on alert for chicken flu

Disease that has killed two could spread to Britain, report Jonathan Mirsky and Nigel Hawkes

DOCTORS in Britain have been asked to look out for cases of chicken flu, a deadly new form of the disease that has already killed two people in Hong Kong.

Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has written to all GPs warning them of the danger. So far, the disease is limited to Hong Kong, where health authorities have reported seven confirmed cases, two deaths, and an additional 12 suspected cases. The virus, called H5N1, had been found only in birds before the first human case appeared in the former colony in May.

Sir Kenneth has set in motion the first phase of the Government's flu pandemic "action plan", which is used whenever a new variety of flu emerges. He said yesterday: "All the preparations are in place to ensure that if the Hong Kong-type flu spreads we are well ahead. This is not a panic measure. It is a way of preparing for this kind of thing so we are ready."

The Public Health Laboratory Service monitors the flu strains in circulation by analysing swabs sent by a selection of GPs. So far, they have found no evidence of H5N1 in Britain, nor indeed of any flu outbreak. "Flu is at present at background levels," a PHL spokesman said yesterday.

ment could speed up the laboratory inspection of the samples. Before Christmas, he added, chicken farms in Hong Kong and in China would be checked. There is no health regulation requiring hygiene certificates for imported fowl.

Katherine Fok, the Secretary for Health and Welfare, said yesterday that medical staff throughout Hong Kong had been put on the alert for victims of the avian virus, although initial symptoms do not vary significantly from those of common flu. Hospitals have made contingency plans to handle more patients. Doctors are concerned that the virus may already have mutated. Keiji Fukuda, from the Atlanta Centres for Disease Control, said yesterday: "It's possible the virus has been circulating among humans and that it's already changed a bit. Viruses change a lot and that's something that worries us."

Although it is not certain yet that H5N1 is transmitted from human to human, Dr Fukuda noted that one of the reasons most of the nine victims are children is that "kids like this are always running around on each other in school and playgrounds. If the virus is airborne or transmitted by touch, this is the group in which it would be most easily transmitted."

A massive surveillance operation has begun in Hong Kong on imported fowl from the Chinese mainland, which make up 75 per cent of the chickens eaten in the former colony. Starting next week, samples will be taken from every truck bringing chickens across the border. The Secretary for Economic Services, Stephen Yip, said yesterday that because of a technical "breakthrough", the govern-



Campbell: declared war on "yellow peril"

## Stickers cover up secrets of the civil servants

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT

THE office worker's yellow sticky label emerged yesterday as a potential weapon for the Sir Humphreys of Whitehall to avoid the constraints of the proposed new Freedom of Information legislation.

Incriminating or sensitive information or remarks can be stuck on to files by officials, and if anyone requests release of the document under Freedom of Information, it is handed over without the yellow stickers.

The fascinating insight into the clandestine world of government was revealed in the Commons yesterday by Ronnie Campbell, Labour MP for Blyth Valley. He had observed the practice used by officials in Australia and was anxious that the use of the stickers — which he dubbed "the yellow peril" — should be outlawed under future British legislation.

Mr Campbell asked Dr David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if he would make it a specific offence for officials to remove such sticky labels.

He said: "This practice was really not right. People were not getting the right information and were being treated of it."

Dr Clark accepted that Mr Campbell had raised "a real point" but was unclear whether it could be made a specific offence.

He told MPs on the public administration committee that Government departments would have to look at the whole issue of record-keeping, and there would be an obligation on them to set new record management standards.

He was unclear whether the practice of using stickers would be covered by the proposed new criminal offence for the "wilful or reckless destruction, alteration or withholding" of records relevant to an investigation by the Information Commissioner. It was clear that MPs on the committee were sceptical about the proposals and how civil servants would "get round" any tough law.

Rhodri Morgan, committee chairman, asked Dr Clark: "Will it be a case of more lunches at the Reform Club rather than circulating advice to ministers?" He urged him to introduce the offence in ahead of the Freedom of Information: "If the new criminal offence comes into being when FoI becomes law then you can imagine a whole process of reading and shredding by officials."

## Smear-test labs face shake-up to allay fears

BY IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

CERVICAL screening services are to be reviewed after Health Department figures disclosed yesterday that two out of five laboratories fail to meet national standards and one in five does too little work to ensure staff maintain the necessary skills for their work.

The review comes after a series of smear-test scares which have shaken public confidence. Sir Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has ordered a rapid review of the work at 181 laboratories involved in screening in England. It should be completed by February. Lack of resources for training staff and running the labs is one of the issues which will be considered.

Sir Kenneth said yesterday he would not hesitate to close down any unit carrying out fewer than 15,000 screenings a year if it was failing patients in any way. The figures show that 34 laboratories handle fewer than that number and that 12 of these also failed to meet the national target for test results. Sir Kenneth said two of these had already been closed and the others would come under closer scrutiny.

The new regulations make it compulsory over the next six months for all laboratories to be officially accredited. This means that staff and facilities must meet approved standards and are then subject to external audit of their performance every five years.

Until now accreditation has been voluntary and one laboratory in three has not joined the scheme. They include Kent and Canterbury Hospital, where 91,000 smears had to be rechecked after faults emerged in the quality of screening.

There, the laboratory there has now been closed and work transferred to the William Harvey Hospital at Ashford, Kent, where, according to the new figures, test results are still not meeting national targets.

Under current guidelines, it is expected that only between 5 per cent and 9 per cent of tests should be inadequate, either because of faulty technique or because of the woman's condition.

This suggests that techniques are of poor standard. A lower number can mask the fact the laboratory is failing to spot women with abnormalities.

The figures show that 80 of the laboratories have results which are outside these target figures, 57 of them with too many inadequate smears and 23 of them with too few. The Royal Albert Infirmary in Wigan, Lancashire, has 34.8 per cent, while the Royal Surrey County Hospital only registers 1.7 per cent.

Staff from laboratories which do not meet the targets will, where necessary, have refresher training.

Calman: will not hesitate to shut failing units

## Children given chance to win days out in Europe

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT, WHITEHALL EDITOR

A DAY out with the British Ambassador in Paris or managing Barcelona football club are among the prizes on offer to British schoolchildren in a government attempt to make Europe popular with the young.

One of Tony Blair's aims for the British presidency of the EU is to reduce Euroscepticism and to enthuse young people about Europe. Doug Henderson, Minister for Europe, teamed up yesterday with Baroness Blackstone, Education Minister, and Chris Rogers from BBC's *Newsround* to launch a series of competitions for children.

"Ambassador for a Day" is open to 11 to 15 year olds and will allow 100 winners to spend a day in Europe. Among the prizes are a day

travelling Europe, could win £5,000 for the school, college or youth group which creates a project to highlight the benefit of links between young people in the United Kingdom and the Continent.

Budding fashion designers are being tempted to compete to stage a catwalk show at the start of British Fashion Week next year and a European youth football tournament is also planned.

A special schools pack, "Partners in Europe", is also available to help schools develop partnerships with schools abroad. The launch took place yesterday at Deptford Green School, New Cross, South London, which has partnership projects with schools in Berlin, Paris and Lisbon.

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# Another slice of reality in BBC's Peeping Tom TV

SOME of the public's most private moments are to be broadcast in a new slate of fly-on-the-wall documentaries to capitalise on the popularity of "voyeuristic" television.

In a move which will reignite the debate on intrusive television, the BBC is to run an eight-part series set in a GP's surgery which films patients during appointments with their doctors, discussing problems ranging from heroin addiction to contraception.

Cameras will also follow the working life of a middle-class male prostitute, employed by wealthy women many years older than himself, who says he works in the sex industry to keep his wife and children in comfort. The cameras stop at the bedroom door, but sound effects are included. BBC3 has

Voyeurism back on our screens as the docu-soap enthalls British viewers, reports Carol Midgley

only just finished screening *Breaking Point*, a six-part series which filmed couples undergoing sessions with Relationship counsellors about their crumbling marriages. On BBC1, *Hotel*, which followed the often cringe-making lives of staff at Liverpool's Adelphi

Hotel, and *Holiday Reps* which filmed travel couriers in Lanzarote and Ibiza, focusing on their careers and their sex lives, were both hugely popular.

The GP's surgery, considered to be sacred in terms of confidentiality, was one of the few areas not yet invaded by the fly-on-the-wall camera. But 80 per cent of patients approached at the practice in Minehead, Somerset, agreed to be filmed over a period of eight months. *Doctor's Orders* will be screened on BBC1 early next year.

Many documentary-makers believe the public mood is changing and Britons are losing their traditional reserve and enjoying "opening up" to the camera in the style pioneered by the Americans.

Alan Yentob, the BBC's director of television, said:

"The British are changing. We would not be able to make these programmes if they were not willing and were not changing their mood."

Paul Slade, one of the GPs appearing in *Doctor's Orders*, said that he had told cameramen to stop filming "once or twice" when he felt the patient was touching on "very private" areas. Asked about the question of confidentiality, he said: "The general principle is that the patients had given their full consent and so had we."

He said that he and his colleagues agreed to take part



Doctors Paul Slade and Huw Thomas, who feature in the new series *Doctor's Orders*, set in a GP surgery

to show GPs' jobs in a realistic light. "People will see that we have off days as well," he said.

The prostitute, Joel Ryan, earns an average £65,000 a year with 1,200 clients, the film relates. He lives in Melbourne, Australia, and became a gigolo when his work as a carpenter dried up. He charges \$180 (£75) an hour.

His wife, Catherine, who also agreed to be filmed and takes many of the bookings on the telephone when her husband is out, says: "As long as I don't know many of the details I can mostly handle it well ... I do know he loves me and he

doesn't love them. If he had an affair, I don't think I could handle it."

The BBC will continue to cater for lovers of docu-soaps with *The Cruise*, filming holidaymakers aboard the luxury cruise ship *Galaxy*, and *Superstore* about the staff working at a Tesco store.

The acclaimed writer of *Band of Gold*, Kay Mellor, will make her BBC debut next year as part of the corporation's new £220 million winter television schedule unveiled yesterday.

Her new serial tackles the world of women's football and

is a departure from her long-running TV drama about a group of northern prostitutes. Filmed in Derbyshire, it centres on a group of women who work for their Sunday morning matches.

Other highlights include the actress Pauline Collins making a rare outing in *The Ambassador*, about Britain's diplomatic representative in Dublin. She plays a widow coping with her high-pressure job and the resentment of her son. Paul McGann returns to British television next year when BBC2 presents a new, four-part adaptation of *Dick-*

ens' Our Mutual Friend

plays the male lead, Eugene Wrayburn, with Anna Friel as Bella Wilfer.

The creator of *Men Behaving Badly*, Simon Nye, has written two new comedies

series for BBC1 and BBC2. *The Last Salute* looks back on the Sixties rivalry between the RAC and AA, and *Do You Want Me?* is a contemporary story, starring Charlotte Coleman, about an urban couple dropped into village life.

*Jonathan Creek* returns for a new series of six mysteries starring the comedians Caroline Quentin and Alan Davies.

Right, pay attention new chaps. This is a train...

BY ARTHUR LEATHERLEY  
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

BRITAIN'S newest train company is setting out to recruit staff demanding they have one vital qualification: they must know absolutely nothing about railways.

Managers of the £440 million Heathrow Express have decided to overlook 90,000 railway staff because they feel that most, tainted with the disrepute and scruffiness of bygone rail days, will not meet the standards required on the new high-speed service beginning next year.

The high-quality service from London's Paddington station to Heathrow is intended to attract large numbers of first class passengers, especially business travellers.

Managers believe that the front-line workers suited to dealing with business people and affluent visitors to Britain are unlikely to be found among the guards, drivers and ticket office staff already working on the railways.

Senior figures at the company say that unreliability, disrepute and scruffiness remain prevalent in the rail industry. "We are different from the other train operators who took over existing services. We can make a clean break and that is what we are going to do," said one manager.

*Jonathan Creek* returns for a new series of six mysteries starring the comedians Caroline Quentin and Alan Davies.

Staff considered suitable for driving trains will be selected after interview and be trained by the company. They will be expected also to master customer-service skills, such as helping passengers on and off trains.

The move was immediately ridiculed by Lew Adams, general secretary of the drivers' union, Aslef. "It is nonsense to think that you can hire a train driver just like that. It takes 18 months to train a driver so they are going to be late getting their trains started. People keep trying to get staff to do every job but they find it doesn't work."



Trevor and Tracey confessed all in *Breaking Point*

## Insurers refuse to drop gene tests

BY IAN MURRAY  
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

GOVERNMENT advisers yesterday called for a two-year moratorium on requiring applicants for life assurance to supply the results of genetic tests, but the insurance industry rejected the idea.

The Association of British Insurers, which published a code of conduct on the use of genetic tests yesterday, had discarded the idea that it should include a moratorium. Peter Jacobs, the association's chairman, said: "There are eight genetic tests which are reliable and which demonstrate either an additional risk, or the absence of risk in which case the

consumer benefits by paying a standard premium," he said. No company asks people directly if they have had a test, but application forms make clear that the insurer must be told everything they know about their own health.

"If a claim is made on a policy, failure to have revealed the results of a genetic test would be grounds to oppose payment," a spokesman for the association said.

Several large companies have self-imposed moratoriums on the use of genetic test results.

The proposal for a general moratorium came from the Human Genetics Advisory Commission, which was set up a year ago to take an overview of developments in

the field. "It is not safe to make predictive statements about genetic tests," said Sir Colin Campbell, the commission chairman. "It is far too early to be able to reach any conclusions about how genetic testing can be used to predict life expectancy or the onset of ill-health. Genetic testing is in its infancy."

He added that many groups feared that they would encounter discrimination.

There was also a lack of research in Britain about the ethical, legal and social implications of genetic testing.

The association's code emphasises that applicants will not be required to take genetic tests but must supply existing results when asked the relevant question.

## Test for Neanderthal DNA

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

SCIENTISTS hope to extract the DNA of Neanderthal Man from fossilised faeces found in a cave on the Rock of Gibraltar.

The fossils — palaeontologists call them coprolites — date from 45,000 years ago and were found by an expedition led by Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum.

He is uncertain whether they

were the product of Neanderthal Man, a hyena or a wolf. Brief examination shows that

they contain fragments of rabbit bone and shells from shellfish, which the people who occupied the cave are known to have eaten. The coprolites will be sent to a laboratory in Munich run by Svante Paabo, an expert in ancient DNA who last year extracted Neanderthal DNA from bones.

Professor Stringer said yesterday: "If we do find any DNA from Neanderthals, and can extract DNA from cells shed

by the person who produced them, we could compare the sequences with the ones from the bones. That would give us a much better basis for comparing Neanderthals to modern humans."

Exploration of the Gibraltar caves has shown that Neanderthals ate shellfish, tortoises, nuts, seeds and a variety of game. They occupied the caves on and off for 60,000 years, between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago.

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Verse to woman who inspired late Poet Laureate found inscribed in book on architecture

# Poem throws light on Betjeman's secret love

BY DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A PREVIOUSLY unknown poem dedicated by Sir John Betjeman to his unattainable love, Myfanwy Piper, has been discovered nearly inscribed in a book on Sir John Soane, the architect of the Bank of England.

The poem was unearthed among hundreds of books and documents being sold by her estate following her death in January at the age of 85. It reads: 'Sir John has blast our Union / In his grey communion / Of plaster cast and stone / Green to the skilful skylight / Sir John has made the walls / How chaste and mild the high light / On child and cherub falls. March 28, 1939. J.B.'

Both Myfanwy and Betjeman were married to other

people — she to the artist John Piper in 1937 and he to Penelope Chetwode in 1933. She was the librettist of Benjamin Britten's operas.

Betjeman's biographer, Bevis Hillier, described the poem as 'a delightful jeu d'esprit', possibly 'a souvenir of a delightful afternoon spent together'. Edward Maags, the antiquarian dealer who discovered the poem while cataloguing Mrs Piper's books and is selling it for £50, suggested that she and Betjeman may have had a 'jolly day out' at the Sir John Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

Finding another poem dedicated to Mrs Piper has excited scholars. She inspired Betjeman, a former Poet Laureate,

to write two of his best poems, most famously *Myfanwy: Kind o'er the kinderbank leans my Myfanwy / White o'er the playen the sheen of her dress / Fresh from the bathroom and soft in the nursery / Soap-scented fingers I long to caress / Were you a prefect and head of your dormitory? / Were you a hockey girl, tennis or gym? Who was your favourite? Who had a crush on you? Which were the baths where they taught you to swim ...?*

The poem, with *Myfanwy at Oxford*, appeared in his 1958 *Collected Poems*.

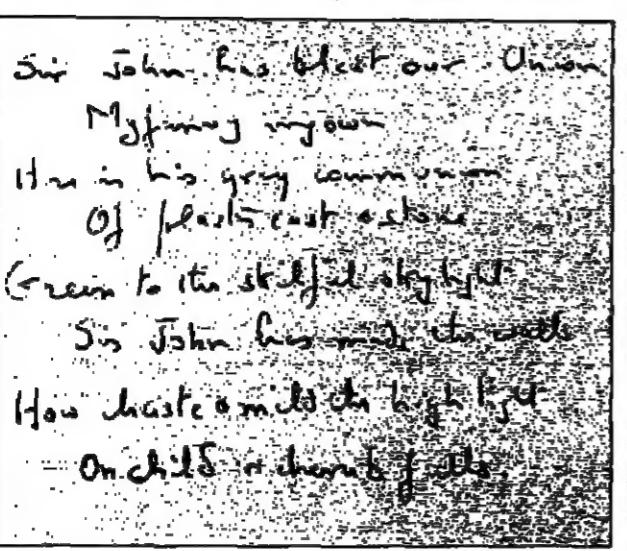
It seems likely that she was his muse, admired only from afar by a poet whom Philip Larkin once said wrote poems that sprung 'from what he

really feels about real life'. Mr Hillier said there was no evidence of an affair, 'primarily because both the Betjemans and the Pipers were so close as couples'.

But he added: 'One doesn't rule out anything in human relationships. There is no doubt that John Betjeman found Myfanwy very attractive. His affectionate nickname for her was Goldilocks. Meeting her seemed to him like the fulfilment of a prophecy because in a book he loved as a schoolboy — Arthur Machen's *The Secret Glory* — a golden Myfanwy was mentioned, and John Betjeman uses just that phrase in one of his two published poems about her. She was the strong kind of woman who particularly appealed to him.'

He doubts that Betjeman — Poet Laureate from 1972 to 1984 — would have betrayed John Piper, a man who became perhaps the best of all his friends. Piper once said that if he had to choose between his art and laughs with Betjeman, he would毫不犹豫地 opt for the latter. The two of them collaborated on the *Shell Guides* to the counties of England, a reflection of their shared passion for architecture.

Mr Maags added: 'Betjeman made a great display of being madly in love with her. She was the ideal woman. She was perfect because she was not only gorgeous, beautiful, kind and supportive, but also because she was married to someone else.'



Sir John has blast our Union  
Myfanwy my own  
How in his grey communion  
Of plaster cast and stone  
Green to the skilful skylight  
Sir John has made the walls  
How chaste and mild the high light  
On child and cherub falls

The poem to Mrs Piper, right, was jotted down in a book on Soane's architecture



## Rival dealers ignore Sotheby's lead

BY DALYA ALBERGE  
AND DANIEL MCGROarty

ART dealers and rival auction houses yesterday rejected the suggestion by Sotheby's that they should follow its example in tightening sales procedures.

Sotheby's introduced new rules earlier this week after a £6.7 million investigation set up after *The Times* and an undercover team from Channel 4 reported that staff had been rigging auctions

and illegally exporting works of art. Diana Brooks, Sotheby's chief executive, said she believed that 'others in the arts world will follow us'.

But a spokesman for the British Antique Dealers Association said: 'There is nothing we can learn from Sotheby's. We already have a policy of due diligence and our own code of conduct not to deal in illegal goods. It was there before Sotheby's problems were ever exposed.'

At Christie's, a spokesman said: 'It has

always been our policy to observe the laws and regulations of all countries in which we operate.'

Professor Lord Renfrew of Kainthorpe, director of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at Cambridge, yesterday expressed dismay at the lack of interest in Sotheby's lead. He said Sotheby's had taken 'a great step forward' and added: 'We will set out to monitor more closely what other auction houses are doing.'

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# Victory for boys who sued unsafe school



Simon Worthington and Rod Salisbury leaving court yesterday with Simon's father, Peter. He wanted the boys to "learn in a safe environment"

TWO pupils at a dilapidated school in Liverpool were celebrating yesterday after the city council was convicted of putting their health at risk.

**Rod Salisbury, 16, and Simon Worthington, 15, from Childwall Comprehensive School, near Allerton, claimed victory in a landmark case after a magistrate ruled that youngsters were in danger of being electrocuted.**

So much water had leaked into classrooms and lavatories in a wing of the 1,300-pupil school that the electrical installation should have been the same as for bathrooms, Liverpool Magistrates' Court was told.

The council has been ordered to repair damaged light sockets, switches and fittings, as well as remove and replace any loose masonry in danger of falling on to pupils.

The case, brought by the teenagers

## Council convicted in landmark case brought by two teenagers, writes Russell Jenkins

and their parent-governor fathers, David Salisbury and Peter Worthington, is the first criminal prosecution of its kind under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The proceedings were monitored by education authorities throughout the country.

The schoolboys complained that the school, some of which dates from the Victorian era, was so squalid that its condition constituted a risk to the health of pupils, teachers and visitors.

Expert evidence highlighted leaking roofs, crumbling masonry on outside walls, disintegrating fixtures and fittings and mould and damp so pervasive that it exacerbated asthma. It was

claimed that the school needed emergency repairs estimated at £2 million. The city council denied four charges of causing statutory nuisance under the Act.

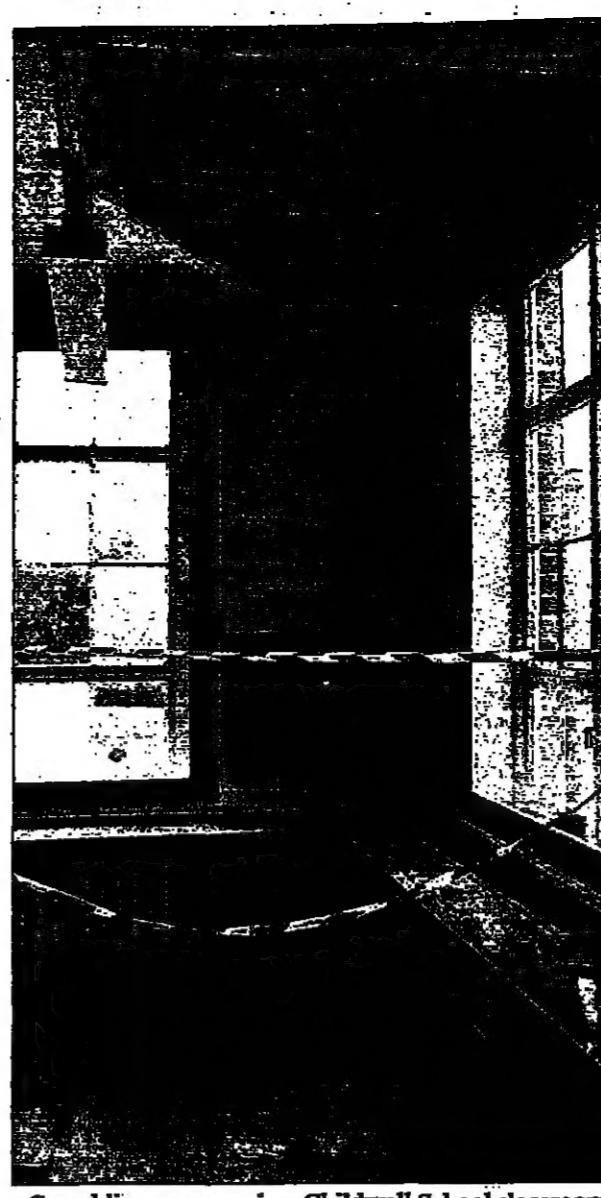
David Tapp, the stipendiary magistrate, said that the court had sympathy with those who said that "children shouldn't be educated in a building like that in this day and age". However, he cleared the council of almost all the charges, except the dangerous electrical fittings and some minor repair work, because the prosecution had not brought the burden of proof needed in a criminal case.

Mr Tapp said in a 25-page judgment:

"I am sure that the condition of the electrical installation due to the ingress of water and the resultant inadequacy of certain safety devices are likely to cause injury to the complainants. And therefore the premises are in such a state as to be prejudicial to health and a statutory nuisance exists."

After the hearing, the pupils drank soft drinks as their parents and lawyer toasted the result with champagne. Simon, wearing his school tie, said: "We have won. It wasn't easy, but it was something that had to be done. I hope now the state of the school can be improved."

Peter Worthington, Simon's father, said he was delighted that the magistrate had delivered the decision they wanted "to help the children learn in a safe environment that is properly maintained by the school".



Crumbling masonry in a Childwall School classroom

## Dismissed teacher claims witch-hunt

By A CORRESPONDENT

A TEACHER who claims she was sacked for being too strict with pupils told an industrial tribunal yesterday that she was the victim of a witch-hunt.

Clare Head, 54, dismissed from the £1,700-a-term St David's School at Ashford, Surrey, after a governors' disciplinary hearing, claims unfair dismissal.

The hearing at Croydon, South London, was told that Mrs Head, from Teddington, southwest London, often played classical music to her class of eight and nine-year-old girls because she thought it helped them to concentrate.

Margaret Langley, the deputy head, said: "I believe it appropriate to have a quiet room to aid concentration. It is not common practice in junior schools to play music in class."

She said she investigated a number of complaints from parents. One had said her daughter was afraid to ask to go to the lavatory; others had complained their daughters were being given too much homework and were afraid to complain about Mrs Head.

Judith Osborne, the head teacher, said that over the years attempts to make Mrs Head comply with the standards of the school had failed. The disciplinary panel had had to decide whether to believe the parents or Mrs Head, who said their complaints were exaggerated.

## 'Right to die' doctor prepares own death

By AUDREY MAGEE  
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

AN IRISH doctor involved in at least three cases of euthanasia in Britain and Ireland has left for Thailand to carry out his own death.

Paddy Leahy, 80, has bladder cancer and has refused further operations. He intends to kill himself next month by swallowing a lethal dose of morphine, and has already said goodbye to his daughter and son.

Dr Leahy, who has a second home in Thailand, has long advocated patients' right to choose their time of death. Euthanasia is illegal in Ireland and is condemned by the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Medical Council.

The doctor, who worked in a health centre in Ballyfermot, Dublin, admitted helping a friend to die with morphine pills two years ago. Dr Leahy said he had helped scores of other terminally ill patients to die, including Second World War veterans in a Coventry hospital.

He said he would "fight like a tiger" to save a patient, but abhorred the suffering imposed on the terminally ill. "Is it advisable to leave a man in even an hour of unnecessary agony when he's determined to die? I am outraged how suffering and torment are tolerated for so long."

No legal action has been taken against Dr Leahy. His case was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Irish Medical Council by Bill Torrey, a consultant chemical pathologist at Dublin's Belmont Hospital. But Dr Torrey withdrew his allegations in 1995 because of Dr Leahy's age.

## Hangover hope lies in herbal shops

By NIGEL HAWKES  
SCIENCE EDITOR

THE long-sought hangover cure may already be sitting on the shelves of herbal medicine shops, according to some researchers.

They believe that a dose of an amino acid supplement called N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC), which is widely available in such shops, can ease the discomfort as the body deals with the strain of too much alcohol.

Carl Wittenbaum, an alcohol researcher of Northwestern University, Chicago, told *New Scientist*: "People I know say that by taking one or two grams of NAC, their head clears in 20 minutes. But it's only anecdotal."

There are scientific reasons for believing that NAC might work. In the body, both ethanol, the normal form of alcohol in drinks, and methanol, which is present in smaller amounts, are broken down by enzymes. These need the aid of two "helper" substances to work effectively.

One of these helpers, glutathione, is used to clear away powerful oxygen radicals produced by the breakdown of ethanol and methanol. It is in limited supply, and if it runs out, the radicals may do tissue damage and add to the hangover sensations.

NAC might repair the deficiency by replenishing the body with the amino acid cysteine, the main component of glutathione, argues *New Scientist*.

The idea ties in with traditional hangover cures such as the "prairie oyster" — a raw egg in tomato juice. Eggs are rich in cysteine, so could have much the same effect as NAC.

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# Prescott gets cooking underneath the arches

By MARK HENDERSON

IT MIGHT not have matched the haute cuisine he once served on Cunard liners, but John Prescott did not seem to mind as he dished out breakfast to homeless youngsters at the new winter shelter in Admiralty Arch yesterday.

Arriving to open it from a near-blizzard in The Mall, the Deputy Prime Minister donned an apron and chucked with volunteers as he cooked up eggs, fried bread, bacon and tomatoes for the homeless 16 to 25-year-olds who will stay at the listed London landmark until March, thanks to the Government's winter shelters programme.

The menu was a bit more extensive on the Cunard, but I'm as delighted to be serving egg on fried bread that I've cooked myself as serving more exotic fare on the cruise liners," Mr Prescott said.

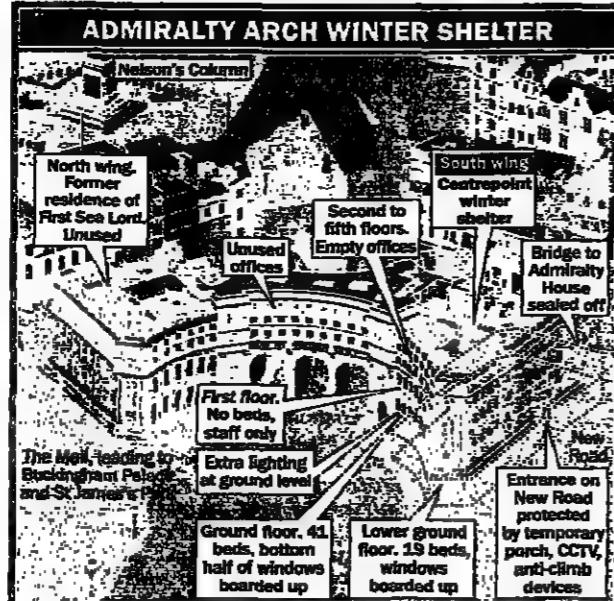
Stephen Ross, 20, originally from Edinburgh, seemed just as delighted as he tucked into his ministerial fry-up. Twenty homeless people moved into the Grade I listed building earlier this week and 60 will stay in the shelter, run by the charity Centrepoint, when it fills to capacity as temperatures drop.

The Government estimates that 500 homeless people will sleep rough regularly in London this winter and as many beds will be available in emergency shelters in the capital. There are also government-assisted hostels in Cambridge and Bristol.

The shelter's neighbours include Admiralty House, where several Cabinet ministers, including Mr Prescott, have flats, the Ugandan Embassy, government buildings on Whitehall and, a few hundred yards along The



A simply furnished bedroom at a prestigious address



Mall, the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

There are a number of prestigious neighbours, so it's an appropriate statement at this time of the year," Mr Prescott said. "It makes me smile when the admirals are coming out and the lower orders come in and, as I am of

the lower orders myself, I see that with some relish."

The arch, which housed the official residence of the First Sea Lord until earlier this year, has been largely unoccupied since the Navy moved its offices in 1994. It was designed by Sir Aston Webb in 1904 after an architectural competi-

tion, as part of the procession route dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria, and was completed in 1911.

The Property Advisors to the Civil Estate, which own the building, offered it to Centrepoint as part of the £4 million winter shelters programme in October, and Westminster council granted planning permission late last month. Residents will use the ground and lower ground floors of the south wing, and 300 are expected to sleep there before it shuts in March.

Most will gain access through referral agencies, but there will be emergency drop-in beds, particularly in cold weather. Victor Adebowale, chief executive of Centrepoint, said the charity was pleased to have use of such an appropriate building. "It's going to be a wonderful location, right next to the Strand, where young people can be found sleeping rough every night."

Residents said they were relieved to get into the shelter now that temperatures were falling. "I am glad to be in here rather than on the streets. Who wouldn't be?" Mr Ross said. "But I want to get a more permanent home, not just three weeks here and two months there."

Jason Bernier, originally from Peckham, southeast London, had slept rough for four months. "I think I should have a fairly good Christmas now that I'm in here," he said. "If this place wasn't open I would probably spend Christmas Eve in a hotel doorway."

The charity approached the Government for use of the arch when a volunteer, Brigadier Chris Dick, came up with the idea after cycling past the empty building.

Residents will have access 24 hours a day, with a cooked

breakfast and dinner and a sandwich lunch. A laundry is provided, as are showers and lavatories. A mix of shared and single bedrooms will be split between 40 men and 20 women, the usual ratio among rough sleepers.

A Centrepoint mental health practitioner will assess



John Prescott provides a ministerial fry-up for the homeless at Admiralty Arch

residents as they arrive. Alcohol and drugs are banned from the hostel, though habitual users will be admitted if their behaviour remains "within acceptable limits". Drugs projects, counselling services and an optician will visit.

Two resettlement workers

will be attached to Admiralty Arch and every resident will receive housing advice. Streets Ahead, the homeless employment agency, will also have a base in the hostel and full details of the Government's welfare-to-work scheme, which begins in April, will be given to residents.

## Grotto dwarves pay their debt to society

By PAUL WILKINSON

A GROUP of offenders are paying their debt to society by putting on white beards and dwarf costumes to help Santa to hand out presents to children in a Christmas grotto.

The offenders are taking part in a community service scheme being staged for the benefit of disadvantaged children on a canal near Mirfield, West Yorkshire.

The project, created by the West Yorkshire Probation Service, is believed to be the only Community Service Order scheme of its kind in Britain. Normally offenders would be painting church halls, repairing furniture for poor families or fitting security locks.

Instead they are working on the floating grotto on a canal narrowboat moored at Shepley Bridge Marina. There they are dispensing Christmas cheer to about 150 special-needs children who will visit them during the next week. The eight offenders include teenage car thieves and a shop manager convicted of drink-driving.

Santa, alias Brian Jennings, a retired community service officer, said: "They work really hard at bringing a smile to the kids' faces and I think the work is very rewarding."

Margaret Fox, a community service officer for Kirklees district, said: "They have an option to come on this scheme or not, but they must dress up and I know they get some stick off their mates in the pub, but they don't seem to mind."

"It is nice for people to see the happier side of what offenders can do on community service. They hand out gifts donated by the Sunshine Variety Club and West Yorkshire Police. All the offenders are obviously carefully vetted."

None of the dwarves wanted to be identified, but one dressed as Dopey said: "We know we have done something wrong, but this is a nice way to pay for it at Christmas time. We have a good laugh together and it is a joy to help bring a bit of magic to the children."

Another helper, who answered only to the name Sleepy, added: "We all think it is a good idea and a useful way of keeping us busy. Being Santa's dwarf is not a soft option, even though some people might see it that way."

## Pastor shatters pupils' faith in Father Christmas

By JOANNA BALE

THE children sat in expectant silence, waiting for the Rev Mark Woods to address their morning assembly and impart a few uplifting words.

Little did the pupils of Alvechurch Church of England Middle School realise that he was about to destroy the innocence of childhood. For Mr Woods, warming to his theme of "the things we leave behind us when we grow up", told them that Father Christmas did not exist. Instead he told them to believe in Jesus.

Several of the children, aged nine to 13, went home in tears after the Baptist minister's fortnightly address to the school in Hereford and Worcester. Two parents tele-

phoned the minister to complain and several contacted the head teacher.

Afterwards Mr Woods, who has two sons aged two and three, said he was upset that his comments had shocked some of the younger pupils, who had still believed in Father Christmas.

"If I had known then, I would have changed what I was going to say. I had the distinct impression at the beginning of the assembly that they didn't believe in Santa Claus and I thought children of nine wouldn't believe any more."

"Before I started the assembly I asked all the children who believed in Father Christmas to put up their arms. A



Judith Harkus-Jeffries complained that her son, Luke, was upset by Mr Woods, right

few of the older ones did and a number of the younger ones. I thought the older ones were joking, and if there had been a forest of arms from the rest I wouldn't have gone any further. But I honestly thought in this day and age that kids as

young as seven or eight knew the truth about Santa Claus. Obviously I was wrong.

"I found out when I was

about seven. I wouldn't say the nine-year-olds at the school who didn't know have led a sheltered life, but they would have found out sooner or later. But I admit it wasn't my place to tell them and I hope I haven't ruined their Christmas. If I have, then I am very, very sorry."

Mr Woods said that, as an example of the things we leave behind us when we grow up, he had told the 100 children that he did not believe in Father Christmas any longer.

But the news was a bitter blow to some of the younger children, including Luke Harkus-Jeffries, nine, who was convinced in that Father Christmas was real. His mother, Judith Harkus-Jeffries, of Alvechurch, said

that she had been shocked when her son told her what had happened.

"He said Mr Woods said he wanted to tell them the true meaning of Christmas — that Jesus was the true meaning of Christmas and Father Christmas was made up just like the tooth fairy," she said.

"I said he shouldn't, have said that because he might have upset some children, and Luke said: 'I was upset'."

Mrs Harkus-Jeffries complained to the school but said there was little she could do to remedy the situation.

"I decided not to say anything to him because I just don't know what to say. The fact that it's come from an adult and someone he looks up to just makes it more difficult."

Christmas Day

25

December

"Thanks ever so much for the jumper..."

Boxing Day

26

December

"No, really, I do like it, honest..."

New Year's Day

1

January

"So you're sure I don't need a receipt?"

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# Jackal denies 'Fatty' gibe made him rebel

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE overweight guerrilla, Carlos the Jackal, on trial for triple murder in a Paris court, has angrily rejected suggestions that being nicknamed "Fatty" as a schoolboy set him on the path of international terrorism.

By turns mocking, menacing and obtuse, the Venezuelan-born Carlos (real name, Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) has already turned the dock into a platform for his sizeable ego, in a trial that risks degenerating into farce.

In four days of increasingly bizarre hearings, he has rebuked and threatened the judge, cracked off-colour jokes and trumpeted his own terrorist credentials during what he called "an international war... fought with the pen, the pistol, the bomb and the nose".

"Don't forget who I am, and treat me accordingly. I am not

under your orders," he admonished Judge Yves Cornéloup on Tuesday, after being told to stop wandering off at tangents.

Carlos later referred to the violent death of another French judge and, looking threateningly at Judge Cornéloup, he added: "You are taking on a heavy personal responsibility."

During one of his rambling monologues, Carlos declared: "I was an example for the revolution. The revolution will continue without me... I am satisfied."

His self-satisfaction was slightly dented, however, when the prosecution suggested that his craving for attention and determination to seek revenge might stem from being teased at school in Venezuela, where he was known as *El Gordo*, or "Fatty". Carlos "suffered due to his

physique", the court was told. "I am fat," Carlos responded, somewhat defensively. "But it's not a problem. It's not a complex."

He became evasive when questioned on his ties to the KGB, but described his activities within the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine as "a war against the Americans and Zionists across the globe. The war was international and it continues".

"Does that mean hostage-taking, executions, things like that?" Judge Cornéloup asked.

"Yes, and hijacking planes," Carlos replied.

"Executions?"

"Yes, even to the extent of executions of French judges," came the pointed response.

While declaring that the legend of Carlos had been "fabricated by the world's press", he also insisted that his terrible reputation had



A courtroom sketch of Carlos the Jackal, left, and Judge Yves Cornéloup on the second day of the trial. Carlos is conducting his own defence.

"caught the world's imagination". He dwelled lovingly on his own mythology, recalling his 100 passports and 52 pseudonyms.

"Carlos was here, Carlos was there. They said anything. He prepared atomic bomb attacks in New York. I read interviews with women de-

scribing their night of passion with Carlos, which made my comrades-in-arms laugh," he bragged.

Outlining Carlos's early years for the prosecution, Daniel Abergard, a police investigator, painted a less flattering picture of the playboy-terrorist, describing him as a

wealthy and ruthless charmer with a very utilitarian concept of women".

To the growing exasperation of the judge, Carlos has declined to furnish specifics of his early activities, maintaining that he would never "grass" on his fellow

"revolutionaries".

## Albright to meet Arafat in London

By MICHAEL BINYON  
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, will this morning meet Yasser Arafat, the President of the Palestinian Authority, in London in a new effort to break the Middle East stalemate. The meeting will come immediately after her talks in Paris with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister.

Ms Albright will tell Mr Arafat that she intends to press for an Israeli commitment to West Bank withdrawal, although Israeli Cabinet ministers said yesterday that Mr Netanyahu would go to Paris without a map specifying the areas from which troops would pull out.

Mr Arafat is likely to warn her that, without an Israeli commitment, violence could flare up and that Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, will be strengthened. Mr Arafat will later see Tony Blair, and probably Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary. □ Jerusalem: Mr Netanyahu yesterday appeared to backtrack over his plan to transfer more land to the Palestinians after Cabinet ministers accused him of jeopardising national security.

## Israeli spy faces court over war risk

FROM ROSE DUNN  
IN JERUSALEM

YEHUDA GIL, a veteran Israeli spy, yesterday pleaded not guilty in a Tel Aviv court to charges that he planted fake information which nearly led to war with Syria.

The 63-year-old former Mossad agent said he was only prepared to admit tie facts in the charge sheet regarding his personal details and previous employment.

A pensioner, he was recruited by Mossad in 1970 and continued to work for the agency after his retirement in 1989 on special contract. His expertise included fluent Arabic and the ability to organise business operations which served as fronts for Mossad agents.

It has been alleged that for years he had contact with an important official in Syria regarding the foreign policy of Damascus but at some point this source dried up. After the period, the Government alleges he began making up a falsifying information that he passed on to superiors.

Mr Gil denied all the charges, especially claims that he intended to harm the security of Israel. The hearing was adjourned to January 8.

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# ANC joy as Winnie quits race

Sam Kiley in Mafeking reports on the drama as the African queen turns defeat into a publicity victory

**SNATCHING** a publicity victory from the jaws of defeat, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela withdrew yesterday from the race for the deputy presidency of the African National Congress, to the delight and relief of thousands of party members at their 50th national conference in Mafeking.

The former wife of President Mandela looked every bit the African queen in a richly embroidered blue kaftan dress as she marched towards the podium after being nominated for the deputy presidency by a woman delegate. She held her audience enthralled as she approached the microphone to announce whether she was going to take on the ANC's chosen candidate, Jacob Zuma.

Nelson Mandela, who resigned as party president this week, looked glum and hung his head as she kept the tension high by allowing her nomination to be seconded from delegates on the floor.

Behind her were anxious members of the national executive who had worked tirelessly most of the previous night to persuade delegates, who still supported her after the revelations at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this month which linked her to a string of murders, to abandon her.

An electoral official asked her if she would accept the nomination. "I do not wish to cause divisions in my party," said Mrs Mandela, who has threatened to leave the ANC

and accused its leadership of plotting to suppress her. "I have not been nominated by the structures, and therefore ask my president [Thabo Mbeki] for guidance," she said.

The tension mounted still further as he explained that a nomination from the floor was nothing to do with the party structures of the ANC.

Mrs Mandela drew a deep breath. "To those comrades who nominated my name, I apologise, I have to decline," she murmured.

Wild cheers engulfed her words as she passed down the line of 30 senior members of the 60-member national executive, receiving hugs and handshakes from every one.

Basing her appeal on an image as a champion of the poor and a party outsider, she had won the only victory she could have — and avoided the humiliation of a probable defeat in a vote which would have permanently destroyed her political power base, which most analysts now believe is derived from a misconception that South Africa's poor adore her in spite of the revelations at the truth commission. Mr Mandela managed to avoid being embraced by his former wife.

His successor, Mr Mbeki, was yesterday elected unopposed, as was Jacob Zuma as the party deputy president, and Kgalema Motlanthe as secretary-general. The new ANC president told delegates that the "revolution was not over" for the party. "We still

have to organise ourselves to ensure we achieve the things for which our movement was established ... the struggle continues," he said.

Only one slot remains to be contested now: the chairmanship, which will be decided on

a secret ballot of the 3,400 delegates. Mr Mbeki's favoured candidate, Steve Tshwete, the Sports Minister, whom Mr Mbeki has used as a trouble-shooter, most recently to attack Mrs Mandela as a "charlatan" and "coward".

Mr Tshwete is to be challenged for the post by Patrick "Terror" Lekota, the former Premier of the Free State, who was dismissed from the post earlier this year by the party's national executive.

Both are robust speakers

and popular in the party. Mr Mbeki was unable to force Mr Lekota to step down ahead of the elections, but backroom manipulation by Mr Mbeki's supporters has indicated that Mr Mbeki is likely to get his way.

## Seoul's thorn in the flesh stakes claim for presidency



FROM NICOL DEGLI INNOCENTI  
IN SEOUL

**SOUTH KOREANS** could elect an opposition candidate as their President when they go to the polls today.

In Kim Dae Jung's case, opposition is definitely the word. The 71-year-old politician, who is running for the fourth time, has been a thorn in the side of the establishment for more than 40 years. In the days of military rule, he survived several attempts on his life; he has been kidnapped, imprisoned, condemned to death and

finally exiled. Since his return in 1985, he has been planning his peaceful assumption of power.

Whoever wins the presidency, in a country where the office carries enormous powers, must face carrying out the reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund in exchange for a record rescue package worth \$60 billion (336 billion).

The new President will also have to deal with the ever-present threat from North Korea, whose famine and mass starvation have made the Communist regime even less predictable. Lee Hoi

Chang, a former Chief Justice, is the ruling party candidate, though he has tried to distance himself from the past by changing its name from New Korea to Grand National Party. His lead in the opinion polls was slashed when it emerged that his two sons had tampered with their medical records to escape compulsory military service.

It is such a serious matter in South Korea, troubled by the threat of invasion by the North, that one son has to return from college in the United States to be examined and weighed in public, while the other felt

a sudden urge to become a voluntary worker in a leper colony.

The third candidate, Rhee In Je, Si, gained notoriety when he left the ruling party to form his own movement, but he is not believed to command more than 15 per cent of the vote.

Mr Lee, who has been described as having the charisma of a granite statue, has tried hard to gain popularity, singing Christmas carols with his grandchildren on television. Mr Rhee has flaunted his youth and jet-black hair, but has appeared rather wooden.

## Attempt to gag dissident

Washington: The Voice of America complained of unprecedented political interference after the White House tried to block the broadcast of an interview with Wei Jingchong, right, the Chinese dissident (Tom Rhodes writes). It was finally broadcast in China on the station's Mandarin-language television channel, but a segment was cut from a news service on Worldnet, another US government outlet.

## Gay marriages rejected

Wellington: Marriage between homosexual couples is illegal. The Court of Appeal ruled to the dismay of a lesbian couple in New Zealand who brought the case. Lesbian couples vowed to keep fighting to get a Bill introduced in parliament to allow same-sex marriage. (AFP)



## WORLD IN BRIEF

### Turkey threatens to end bid for EU

Ankara: Mesut Yilmaz, the Prime Minister, said yesterday Turkey would withdraw its application for European Union membership by June if it were not included in a list of candidates, the state-run Anatolian news agency said. Ankara first applied to join in 1963.

Earlier this week Mr Yilmaz vowed to freeze ties with the EU after it decided at its Luxembourg summit to exclude Turkey from its formal list of 11 future members. "We will not change our position until we are put in a basket with the 11 countries," Mr Yilmaz declared. (Reuters)

Letters page 21

## Yeltsin set to resume work

Moscow: President Yeltsin will return to work next week and plans to visit India in January, the Kremlin said (Richard Beeston writes). "His health is satisfactory," said Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Mr Yeltsin's spokesman. "The doctors said [on December 10] that the President would be back within ten to 12 days and he is going to be back within that time."

## Homosexual grand tour

Strasbourg: A gay member of the European Parliament plans to visit EU applicant countries with his boyfriend to underline that the Union protects gays from discrimination. Peter Pex, a Dutch Christian Democrat, said homosexuality was forbidden in Cyprus and, while legal in Romania, visiting gay couples faced arrest there. (Reuters)

## Sakharov prize for Algerian

Strasbourg: Salima Ghezali, an Algerian human rights campaigner, received the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought, worth 15,000 ecus (£10,000), and called for an international inquiry into massacres in her country. She said an inquiry could end the impunity with which both sides in Algeria blamed the other. (Reuters)

## Mafia 'godmother' held

Brindisi: A woman was arrested yesterday on suspicion of being the "godmother" of one of Italy's most important Mafia clans. Maria Buccarella, 42, is thought to have taken over the Sacra Corona Unita, the Mafia of the southeastern Apulia region, from her brother. She and three other women were arrested here after a four-month hunt. (AFP)

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## THE SUNDAY TIMES



As time goes by, we forget the creator of Casablanca. The Sunday Times Magazine on the playwright who died this year, broken-hearted

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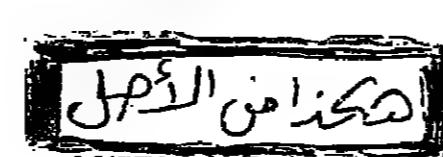
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# Lawyer shot in row over Caribbean isle

A LONG-RUNNING dispute between a Welsh expatriate couple and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda erupted in gunfire when shots were fired in the office of the brother of the Prime Minister.

Cyril "Taffy" Buffon and his wife Bonny are fighting a government eviction order to quit the tiny Caribbean island of Guiana, which sits barely 100 yards off the coast of Antigua, where they have lived alone for 32 years.

On Tuesday Mr Buffon, 73, allegedly shot his lawyer, Vere Bird Jr, the Prime Minister's brother and an MP, after he voted in favour of the forced removal of the couple by police.

No one witnessed the shooting, but after the vote Mr Buffon confronted Mr Bird in his law firm offices, and allegedly shot him, wounding the lawyer in the jaw. Mr Buffon was also injured, suffering a gunshot wound to his hand.

Lester Bird, the Prime Minister, went on television on Tuesday night and blamed the incident on Antigua's political opposition and two local newspapers. He accused them of inciting the Buffons and their supporters to defy the law.

The police have not brought charges so far, but Mr Buffon, in police custody in hospital, was expected yesterday to appear before a local magistrate.

Both the injured men are being treated at the Holberton



Antigua's move to evict a Welsh couple to build a resort has led to violence, writes David Adams

Samuel Derrick, publisher of *The Observer*, an opposition newspaper in Antigua, is expected to begin next month.

The Prime Minister's brother, a former government minister who had long been at odds with his brother, had stood up to the Welsh couple, even lobbying successfully to have Mr Buffon appointed as official game warden of the 300-acre island, complete with a small salary and a government vehicle.

But when the Government asked the Buffons to leave the island, they resisted and hired Mr Bird in an attempt to claim squatters' rights. "It's unreal. One brother is trying to get him evicted, and the other brother is his lawyer," Mr Derrick said.

The Buffons have been supported in their campaign by local environmentalists fighting to stop the tourism project in order to protect the island's wildlife. Guiana is home to an important colony of 240 fallow deer, the national symbol of Antigua and Barbuda.

Tensions rose a few weeks ago when Mr Buffon ignored a police order suspending his gun licence, and ordered him to hand over firearms known to be in his possession.

Mr Bird, who is also chairman of the ruling Antigua Labour Party, was due to appear in court today to try to prevent the eviction. The climax came during a parliamentary debate on Tuesday when Mr Bird spoke up for the Buffons, but voted for a law that authorises the police to evict the couple, by force if necessary. The law also offers the Buffons alternative accommodation, a government vehicle and a compensation stipend of \$630 (£37) a month.

"It was fairly generous. Taffy would have been fairly well looked after," said Mr Derrick. "What Taffy needs right now is some new legal representation. He has abused all the lawyers in town. We have talked to a number of lawyers this morning and no one is interested."

Mrs Buffon, reportedly, remains on Guiana, possibly unaware of the alteration between her husband and Mr Bird. But Mr Derrick said the Government was not taking any chances. "The Prime Minister said this woman is a crackshot, so much so that the police are afraid to go over there. She has them at bay," he said.

Mr Bird Jr served in his father's Cabinet but had to leave in 1990, when a commission labelled him a conspirator in a shipment of ten tons of Israeli arms via Antigua to the Medellin drug cartel's private army in Colombia. Two years earlier, he was tainted by charges of corruption in a \$11 million deal to renovate Antigua's airport. He has maintained his innocence. Guiana is a flat piece of

The home of the Buffons on Guiana island, where they have lived for 32 years

## Woman ahead in Guyana poll

Georgetown: Janet Jagan, a Chicago-born expatriate who made a career of fighting for Guyana's independence, held a close lead last night over the opposition leader, Desmond Hoyte.

With 134,000, or 29 per cent, of votes counted, Mrs Jagan's People's Progressive Party had 68,000 votes. Ex-President

Hoyte's People's National Congress had 61,000. Other parties split the rest.

Mrs Jagan, 77, had the support of the South American country's majority Indo-Guyanese. The 68-year-old Mr Hoyte, however, said he was confident because his party, traditionally strong among blacks and urban residents,

had made inroads among other races.

Mrs Jagan, whose Marxism made her the object of US wrath during the Cold War, was poised to become Guyana's first female leader, climaxing a long political journey she shared with her husband Cheddi, who died as President in March. (AP)



## Japanese cartoon puts 700 in hospital

By NICK NUTTALL

A JAPANESE television network yesterday called in doctors, psychologists and animation experts to find out why a cartoon triggered convulsions among hundreds of children nationwide.

Hironari Mori, programming division manager of TV Tokyo, said that more than 700 people, mainly children, were taken to hospital on Tuesday night after watching the programme, which was based on the 'Pocket Monsters' video game.

The Japanese Home Affairs Ministry said that 208 people, aged from three upwards, including a man, 55, were still in hospital with epilepsy-type symptoms more than 24 hours after the broadcast.

Experts believe that the children, who reacted after an explosive scene in the cartoon, was followed by five seconds of flashing lights, were photo-sensitive. Dr Ley Sander, a consultant neurologist at the National Hospital for Neurology in London and an adviser to the National Society for

Epilepsy, said that the chance of a television programme triggering similar seizures in Britain was almost zero.

"Certain damaging, flashing frequencies are not allowed to be broadcast in this country. They may not have the same guidelines in Japan," Dr Sander said.

Earlier this year, the Independent Television Commission banned advertisements for Boots cosmetics and Marmite gravy cubes over concern that the intensity of strobe-like images might trigger fits.

Dr Lawrence King of the National Society for Epilepsy, said that up to 5 per cent of epileptics can have seizures brought on by flickering lights such as strobescopes, flickering sunlight while driving through a forest or a flashing video game.

Other children with "low thresholds" may also be vulnerable to fits if the flickering stimulus is powerful enough, even though they are not genuine epileptics.

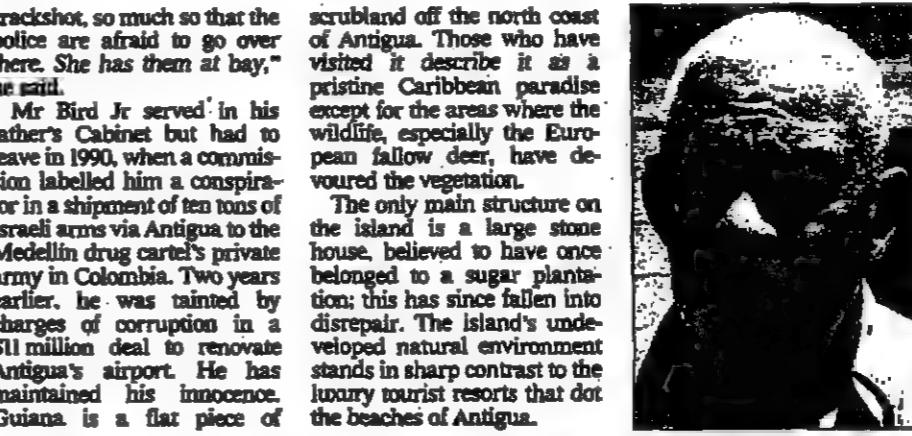
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Bonny and Cyril Buffon are fighting their eviction; below, Vere Bird, who was shot



scrubland off the north coast of Antigua. Those who have visited it describe it as a pristine Caribbean paradise except for the areas where the wildlife, especially the European fallow deer, have devoured the vegetation.

The only main structure on the island is a large stone house, believed to have once belonged to a sugar plantation; this has since fallen into disrepair. The island's undeveloped natural environment stands in sharp contrast to the luxury tourist resorts that dot the beaches of Antigua.

## Antigua dynasty keeps grip on power

THE Bird family has controlled the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for decades through their domination of the governing party. At times they have seemed to run the islands as a fiefdom.

The towering figure of fit Sir Vere "Papa" Bird, 88, the island's first Prime Minister, founded one of the Caribbean's most pervasive dynasties. In 1994 he was succeeded as Prime Minister by his son, Lester, 59, brother of Vere Jr, the victim of Tuesday's alleged attack.

Although the family's leading members have avoided direct criticism of corruption, their paternalistic style and strong pro-business attitudes have attracted criticism within the Caribbean. Yet the stability they have brought to the country has undoubtedly allowed them to attract lucrative offshore investment and the islands are now visited by tens of thousands of British tourists every year.

Seven years ago, Vere Bird Jr was recommended to be banned for life from holding government office after an inquiry found that officials had connived in the smuggling of Israeli arms shipments to the Medellin drugs cartel in Colombia.

Another report into the building of the V. C. Bird International airport in Antigua concluded that Mr Vere Jr, known in the island as "Runway" Bird, had acted "in a manner unbecoming a minister of government".

Further allegations of corruption have since been made involving the sale of Antiguan visas and passports to Hong Kong residents in the run-up to the handing over of the colony to China. However, Lester Bird was cleared of any wrongdoing by an independent inquiry.

The United States-based human rights organisation Freedom House claimed that the February 1994 election was not free or fair, alleging that voting was not secret and that ineligible votes had been cast. Others criticised the lack of opposition access to the state-owned media.

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# Which is best: burgundy or beer?



**Dr Thomas Stuttaford**  
on red wine;  
smoking;  
sleeping  
policemen;  
scanners and  
the Two  
Fat Ladies

**C**hristmas drinking is unlikely to be interrupted by thoughts of whether wine is better for the drinker's heart and health than beer, but once again this is being debated by biochemists.

It is now acknowledged by the majority of doctors that all alcoholic drinks, and even pure ethanol, inhibit platelet aggregation so that the platelets, the small particles involved in blood coagulation, do not stick together to form clots so readily in the blood vessels of the heart and brain.

A research paper written by doctors at the department of cardiology at the University of Wisconsin has recently been published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. These scientists have come down heavily on the side of red wine being superior to other alcoholic drinks and support their case with laboratory experiments as well as statistics from studies in the community. Their research has shown that a blood alcohol level produced by drinking red wine need only be a tenth of that produced by other alcoholic drinks to achieve the same effect on platelet stickiness.

The red wine, too, was also more efficient than other drinks in increasing the proportion of high-density lipoproteins, the good cardio-protective cholesterol, and reducing the amount of the low-density cholesterol. The advantage of red wine lies in the way it is produced, which includes using the grape skin. The grape skin contains antioxidants, phenolic flavonoids, which reduce the tendency of the blood to clot. Red wine, therefore, has two rather than one major cardio-protective constituents.

The flavonoids in red wine also help in the oxidation, the process thereby helping to prevent them from furring up the coronary arteries. The greatest concentration of the heart-giving flavonoids are found on grapes grown in slightly damp climates like Burgundy, where fungus can flourish. Red wine from these districts is therefore more

**The  
advantage  
of red wine  
lies in the  
way it is  
produced**

those who drank up to two drinks a day had a 19 per cent reduction in the overall death rate from cancers and coronary heart disease. Those who drank up to the British guideline of four drinks a day reduced the death rate by 36 per cent, but drinking any more than this increased the death rate for strokes and some cancers. In Shanghai, the advantages were experienced whatever the drink the men chose.

Although it may not seem like it, sometimes on the morning afterwards a few drinks can be good for the stomach and duodenum. The small organism *Helicobacter pylori*, which causes peptic ulcers, is vulnerable to alcohol and, in particular, red wine. Within 15 minutes of drinking red wine, the number of *Helicobacter pylori* organisms starts shrinking. This may account for the findings of a large Danish study, which shows that a moderate intake of wine and spirits reduces the likelihood of peptic ulceration.

**T**he Munster study showed that in Bavaria, a predominantly beer-drinking area, not only did the beer drinkers have a lower death rate for coronary heart disease but that the overall mortality was less. These changes applied to men and women.

Interestingly, the possible use of alcohol has not extended to China. The study of 1,824 men in Shanghai showed

A few drinks the morning after can be good for the stomach and duodenum because the organism *Helicobacter pylori*, which causes peptic ulcers, is vulnerable to alcohol

## Cigars lead to frank diagnosis

**F**inding a suitable Christmas present for Frank, my 64-year-old bachelor brother, is always a problem. This year nobody will

surgeon looked down his throat and saw an unpleasant-looking tumour in the larynx but the vocal cords were working well.

Instead, he will be presented with a suitably wrapped Nicorette inhaler, the latest device, obtainable without prescription, to help people to stop smoking.

Frank, who has been smoking and inhaling more than 20 cigars a day for at least 40 years, is not so hoarse that any protests about his change in gift is unlikely to be heard.

Every case of hoarseness should be investigated if it is unexplained and lasts for more than two or three weeks. Frank, however, has been hoarse for 20 years, but a lifetime in a medical family has given him some cynicism about doctors and he has previously rejected all suggestions for investigations.

Finally, Frank's voice became so affected that he capitulated. The

surgeon looked down his throat and saw an unpleasant-looking tumour in the larynx but the vocal cords were working well.

The tumour, which had presumably been growing since his hoarseness began, was removed and examined by a pathologist. Fortunately, it was not as unpleasant as it looked and was a benign fibroma.

However, the cords, which looked to be suffering from no more than chronic irritation resulting from being perpetually bathed in cigar smoke, showed widespread pre-malignant changes.

The most important treatment is to stop smoking, in which case there is a chance that the cells of the cords will return to normal. Such is my brother's addiction to cigars that he cannot, and has only managed to reduce his intake to eight or ten a day.

The carcinogenic effect of tobacco smoke on the larynx is often increased by drinking. Alcohol and tobacco can be a lethal combination, when drinking by itself may not be detrimental. This, however, is not my brother's problem. He is such a slight social drinker that it is sometimes necessary to blow the dust from his sherry bottle.

**N**icorette inhalers may work in cases where nicotine patches, chewing gum or nasal spray have failed, as they provide many of the ritualistic features of smoking, the loss of which contributes to the difficulty that people find in giving up.

Ex-smokers miss opening the packet, the hand to mouth movements many hundreds of times a day, and the soothing dum Dum effect of a cigarette between the lips. The Nicorette inhaler, which retains these rituals, looks like a white cigarette holder.

A cartridge containing nicotine fits

into it and as the smoker draws on the mouthpiece it delivers into the mouth about a third of the amount of nicotine normally found in a cigarette. Each time a smoker craves a cigarette he takes a pull on the holder, and the craving is relieved. People using the inhaler should not use more than 12 cartridges a day and after eight weeks it is hoped that the craving, and the smoking routine, would have gone, without any withdrawal symptoms.

Over the next two weeks the cartridge intake is halved, and then cut off completely during the following fortnight.

Only 5 per cent of those people who are strongly addicted to tobacco are able to give up and depend on willpower alone. The Nicorette inhaler doubles this figure and is particularly useful for those who like the ritual of smoking and who have been smoking fewer than 20 cigarettes a day.

## Rough ride for backs

**S**LEEPING policemen, the ridges installed across roads to slow down urban traffic, inevitably produce a rough ride for anyone travelling in a vehicle.

But now *Talk Back*, the magazine of the National Back Pain Association, has some advice about how drivers may reduce this jolting in order to help passengers with spinal diseases. Crossing the bumps can cause these people appreciable pain, which may persist for hours after the journey has ended.

In the article, Dr A.K. Clarke writes that this jolting can be lessened if drivers change their technique when approaching the sleeping policeman. Most people brake just before the bump, pass slowly over it, then accelerate. Braking in this way has the effect of bringing the front of the vehicle down, thereby increasing the effect of the jolt on those inside the car.

Dr Clarke suggests that the correct way is to brake some distance from the sleeping policeman and then to accelerate just as the car starts to go over the bump. Accelerating at this time lifts the front of the car, reduces the jolt, and thereby eases the pressure on the spine.



A sleeping policeman can cause a nasty jolt to the spine

## Fat and Alzheimer's

**A**RE the Two Fat Ladies with their delicious menus going to reduce us to dementia in old age? Their diet may have done their own grey cells little harm, but it seems that high blood cholesterol may be a factor in Alzheimer's disease. As alcohol reduces the likelihood of Alzheimer's, perhaps the wine they drink compensates for the high fat content.

Although there is a strong genetic link, environmental factors also seem to be of importance. Professor Brian Austin, of St George's Hospital, London, has demonstrated that a raised blood cholesterol may be a factor in the cause of some cases of Alzheimer's. "By adopting lifestyles known to lead to a lowering of blood cholesterol, such as regular exercise, an appropriate diet and by following outdoor pursuits, it is possible that we may be able to protect ourselves against the disease," he says.

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## Scanners keep getting better

**D**ORSET boasts a new county hospital in Dorchester, which serves north and west Dorset. But unfortunately it does not have an MRI scanner. When brains and spinal cords have to be visualised, abdomens checked for malignant glands, sinuses inspected, and joints examined without surgery, patients have to take a 100-mile round trip. But Dorset people are not dismayed by the absence of a scanner. Instead they have accepted the challenge and are raising the funds before it became available.

Scanners continue to improve. The London Clinic, for instance, has recently installed a new model which gives 50 per cent greater strength. As well as doing routine work, it will enable doctors to obtain much better views of the gall bladder and pancreas as well as excellent images of the breast, so that ductal tumours may be detected.

The new scanner is no quieter than the old one and probably no less claustrophobic, but it should be remembered that most patients do not find the hammering noise frightening and do not suffer from claustrophobia.

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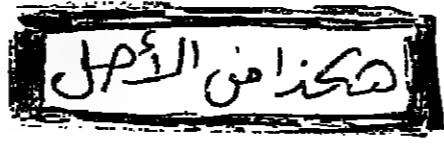
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# 'We can't go on killing each other'

The brutal murder of an Israeli soldier by Hamas terrorists led his mother to embark on a mission of peace. Interview by Michael Freedland

**N**achshon Wachshon was 19, an Israeli soldier with the kind of bright smile that made people like him, when he went home for a week's leave in 1994. On October 8, the Sabbath, the army rang, telling him to attend a one-day course on operating a special tank.

"I'll be home on Sunday night," he told his mother as he left for a northern army base. Those were his last words to her. Nachshon was kidnapped by Hamas terrorists and, after five days in which he was paraded on television pleading for his life, he was killed as Israeli commandos attacked the house where he was being held.

"We were devastated," says Esther Wachshon. She is a composed woman and at first glance does not seem like the typical Jewish mother, full of noisy emotion for her family. She is, of course, it is just that she separates her private grief from her public crusade. During the past three years she has travelled the world, pleading for Arabs and Jews to forge a new understanding which, she hopes, will end the brutality that led to the murder of the third of her seven sons. "We can't go on killing each other," she says.

A small, warm and bespectacled woman of 49, she still has a distinct New York accent (although it is 27 years since she lived in America). She does not wear make-up and always

wears a hat. She looks and sounds like a thousand other Orthodox Jewish women who believe that Jewish women should hold on to land no matter what the cost in human lives. The stark difference in her perspective emerges only as she describes the last days of Nachshon's life and explains the mission that

his movements to the last place where he was seen. On Tuesday afternoon, Israel television came to our home with that infamous video. I felt relief that my son was alive; I believed we would save him.

There were many reasons why Nachshon was a catch for the terrorists. He was intensely religious yet he had qualified for the crack Golani Brigade. At 5ft 8in and 9st stone, he was the smallest and lightest man in the force, a fact that would have disqualifed him had he not shown such exceptional dedication and aptitude.

Hamas issued an ultimatum, demanding the release of its spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (freed this year by the Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu). Mrs Wachshon appealed to the Government of the then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, to negotiate with the captors. He refused. She appealed to the US Government, and Warren Christopher, then Secretary of State, contacted Yasir Arafat, who promised the Wachshons that if Nachshon was in Gaza, he would find him and return him safely. The Wachshons felt optimistic.

**B**ut he was not in Gaza. On October 14 Israeli commandos raided the house where their intelligence had revealed he was being held. "Nachshon and the commander of the rescue team — just a few months older than him — were killed at the very hour of the ultimatum's expiry," says his mother.

This week saw the official opening of the Nachshon Wachshon Centre for Tolerance and Understanding, a college she has set up in Jerusalem to hold lectures for people on both sides of the conflict. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Mr Netanyahu and the opposition leader, Ehud Barak. Mrs Wachshon has already organised forums between Jews, Christians and Muslims designed to teach them about each other's way of life.

"My son was always the peacemaker, in the family and the army," says his mother. "He couldn't bear arguments. He felt the same about the fight between Israel and the Arabs. This centre should be

'He was killed at the very hour the ultimatum expired'

is taking her to speaking engagements with Jewish and non-Jewish organisations.

Nachshon was hitch-hiking when a group of bearded men wearing skullcaps offered him a lift. Assuming them to be Orthodox Jews, he accepted. He was taken to a secret destination which, his family later discovered, was just ten minutes away from their home in Ramot, on the hills surrounding Jerusalem.

"My sons never come home without calling their mother," says Mrs Wachshon. "We knew that if he did not call, he could not call. When he did not arrive on Sunday night we notified the army. We traced

Nachshon held by Hamas

his legacy. It is important to try to educate people in peace, if not in love and friendship."

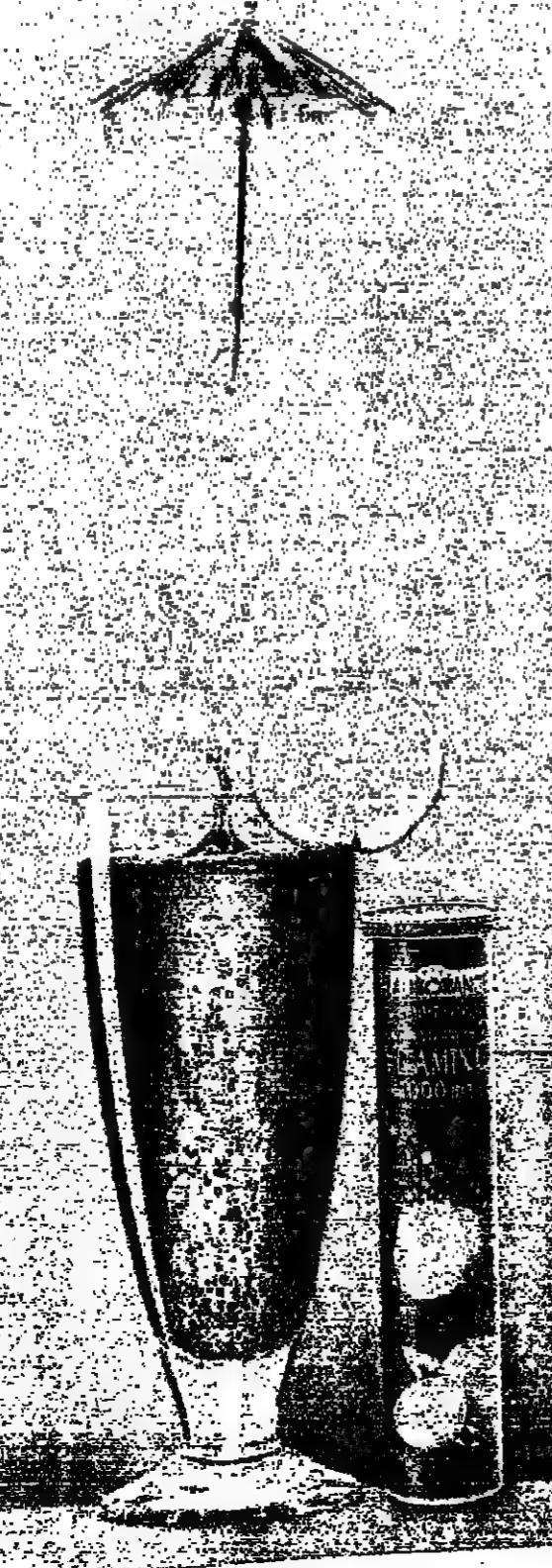
In this spirit Nachshon's father, Yehuda, met Sheikh Yassin Bader, father of the man who killed Nachshon. They issued a joint statement saying that the death penalty should be enforced for murderers by terrorists.

"My husband thought he had found a Palestinian partner and that Palestinian youth could become involved in working for peace. Then Hamas said it would kill Sheikh Bader and it all came to an end."

"I would love to live in a better world. I feel much more than bitterness to the animals who kidnapped my son."

She looks exhausted. In addition to her ceaseless quest to keep the public memory of her son alive, she is mother to a large family. Does she treasure her remaining six sons all the more? "Oh no," she says. "We have a very normal love for them."

"Nachshon had not yet worked out his life. He was a good student, a popular boy. Everybody loved him for his good nature, his eternal smile, his compassionate personality. His whole future was ahead of him. He could have done and been anything. Instead we have a tombstone on Mount Herzl."



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Esther Wachshon: "My son was a peacemaker, in the family and the army"

## The end of the affair

Should you return the diamonds when romance dies, asks Grace Bradberry

**T**he wit Cyril Connolly was quite right when he remarked: "A lot of pain and nuisance might be avoided if the rich would only appreciate the point where love becomes money."

John Lattanzio, 49, a Wall Street trader and multimillionaire, is counting the cost of failing to make that distinction. Having loved and lost not only Ines Misian, a twenty-something Latvian model, but also the \$500,000 of jewellery he gave her, he has now gone to law in an attempt to heal, if not the emotional, then the financial wounds.

His case is that Miss Misian had promised to marry him, and these are therefore engagement presents. She insists that there was no such deal. Diamonds are forever, particularly when they come from Cartier (a \$147.20 necklace), from Harry Winston (a \$289.275 platinum ring), and Van Cleef & Arpels (a \$20.026 ring). Miss

Misian has expressed horror and repugnance. A graduate of the Zsa Zsa Gabor school of dating — "I never hated a man enough to give him diamonds back" — Miss Misian said: "This is an insult for him to ask me for the jewellery back. It's like giving a child a candy and ripping it out of his mouth once he's sucking it... I get attached to gifts, especially diamonds. I'm a beautiful woman."

Her attachment to Mr Lattanzio proved weaker, and there must be material girls everywhere who sympathise with her predicament. The silver screen of one's romantic imagination can become brutally split. On one side a Disney world of diamonds, cars and Manolo Blahnik shoes, on the other a film noir feature in which Balding Barry expects quality time in return. If only one could turn off the second projector and enjoy the main movie without distraction.

True, there are few men who could match the generosity of Mr Lattanzio. The De

Beers slogan — How else can a month's salary last a lifetime? — does not apply in this case. A month of Mr Lattanzio's salary could quite easily last a lifetime converted into nothing more than Post Office Savings Certificates.

Nevertheless, this is a tale of relevance to us all. Must the dispatch of a boyfriend mean the tearful exchange of Gucci dresses for Black & Decker Workmate, of cashmere sweater for a boxed set of Terry Pratchett novels? Is there a let-out clause for perishables? And what about such "non-returnables" as La Perla knickers?

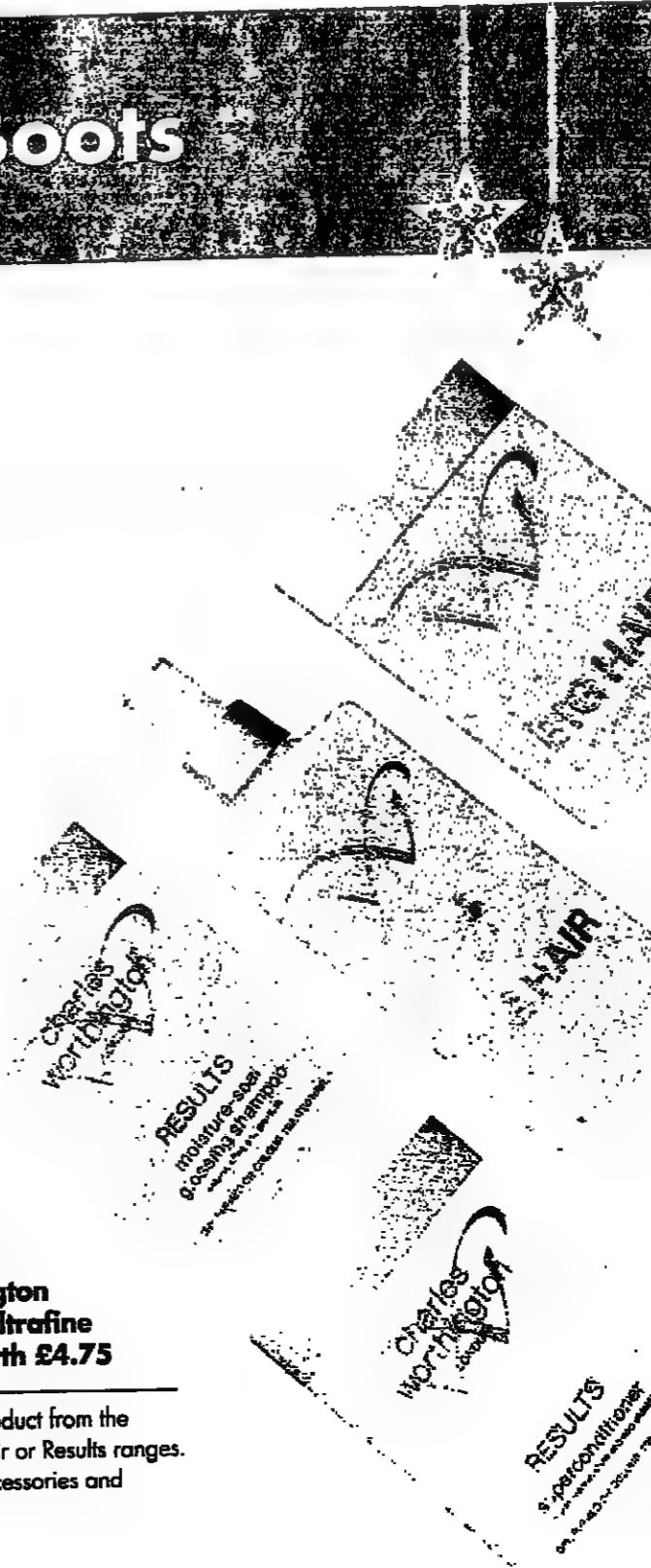
Where gifts of roughly equal value have been exchanged, there need, of course, be no dilemma. A Tiffany diamond solitaire necklace exchanged for an Aramis umbrella gives more pause for thought.

Thankfully there is no need to agonise, according to John Morgan, author of *Debrett's New Guide to Etiquette and Modern Manners*. "On the whole in life, we can't give things and then take them away," he says. "It's good manners for a woman to return the engagement ring if her marriage is called off because it's a symbolic present. But if a woman divorces she keeps the ring — unless it's a family heirloom. In general, gifts are the woman's to keep."

**B**y these rules, Mr Lattanzio can only reasonably expect to recoup the engagement ring (if that's what it was) and then only at Miss Misian's discretion (should she have any).

While Miss Misian may at first appear the vulgar of the tale, it is in fact the ageing trader who has committed the *faux pas*. "The thing about this man is he lives in a world where only money talks," says Mr Morgan. "In relationships it's quite wrong to say that everybody has their price. He's given her the presents and they are hers."

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# Let charity begin with charities

Frank Prochaska on the vital role of the voluntary sector

In an article on this page last week, Matthew Parris depicted charities as "a state within the State", so raising an issue that goes to the heart of our social democracy. He suggests that by claiming tax exemptions, charities are denying the Treasury — "the greatest charity of all" — money essential to the maintenance of the welfare state. Shall we assume that he will lead the way this Christmas by making a voluntary donation to the Inland Revenue?

There is not much doubt that the law on charities is a "conceptual and administrative mess". And it is also true that many of them have lost touch with traditions of personal service and volunteering. But denying tax exemptions to all charitable institutions would mean that many would close, and others would never emerge.

Where is the advantage in this to the Treasury? Removing charitable status might produce modest gains in government revenue, but at the expense of pluralism and choice in social provision. And who is to say that civil servants would use the savings more efficiently? The Government itself, now the largest single contributor to charity, now accepts that voluntary institutions can be more efficient than state bureaucracies.

The issue is not that the voluntary sector has become a state within the State, but that so many charities have become agencies of the State. Voluntary activity may be defined as the antithesis of collective or statutory authority. Its independence is its lifeblood. With so much of their money coming from government sources, many charities today lack genuine freedom of action. Many others, of course, receive nothing from the State and pursue issues of little interest to politicians. Indeed, they are so varied that they can hardly be called a coherent sector at all. To all but tidy-minded collectivists this creative chaos is one of the nation's great strengths. Those who call for a redefinition of charitable purposes, or the removal of tax exemptions, should keep this in mind. The elimination of charitable status would be a further stage in the perfection of the state monolith.

Charity makes its greatest contribution to national wellbeing by its very diversity and rivalry, by its love of the *ad hoc* remedy and its seemingly inefficient muddle. It is invaluable not simply because it provides goods or services but because it offers an altruistic, non-compulsory alternative to the State's materialistic conception of public need. It is a delusion to expect altruism to come from a Treasury-driven Government. Ask today's single parents.

To the Victorians, the idea that individuals could simply sit back, pay their taxes and leave the removal of social inequalities to government officials was anathema. They believed that the resulting bureaucracy could not satisfy local needs and aspirations. Moreover, the intermediary institutions of civil society acted as a safeguard against

The author is a Visiting Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford, and the author of *The Voluntary Impulse* (1988).

WE have wondered here why Ian Hargreaves, the garrulous Editor of the *New Statesman* (proprietor: Geoffrey Robinson) has been strangely muted about the Robinson affair. Now we have discovered why. The company at the heart of the hoo-hah, Stenbell, pays Hargreaves's salary. My eye is drawn to a payment of more than £50,000 recently made by the *New Statesman* to Stenbell, which made complex transactions with an offshore trust on behalf of Robinson. Hargreaves offers this explanation:

"Although what I do every day, and every week, I go into the *Statesman*'s offices, I am technically employed by Stenbell. So the *Statesman* has to pay them for the services of myself and my staff. Big money, this, for an editor and staff of a small magazine. Impressive that it can raise the cash. It has come a long way since its foundation in 1913 by Sidney and Beatrice Webb "to make the thinking person socialist". In 1938 its board constituted itself a "self-perpetuating trust" as the best way "to ensure that the ideals and policies of the journal shall be kept free from outside interests".

But since Robinson, now Paymaster General, took over last year it has lost its Red fever: dreary Marxist theories of ownership have been replaced by bracing eulogies on company profits.

ALLEGEDLY bribing their instructors for better pass marks has

done little to enhance the reputation of foreign cadets at Sandhurst. They are now referred to by their British peers as FLOPS: foreign lazy overseas plonkers.

Leak soup

A CASE for Poirot. The strange vanishing of David Clark's career as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is the subject of a double investigation by Robin Mountfield,

overbearing officialdom. And they could achieve their purposes without being enmeshed in politics.

After the Second World War, citizens became predominantly consumers of government, rather than participants in it. To put it another way, indirect, representative democracy, expressed through Cabinet government, reigned supreme in social policy over the spontaneous pluralism of local, civic institutions. The welfare state dwarfed the funds available to charities, brought universal benefits and tackled social problems in a comprehensive way. As a result of the State's predominance, voluntary institutions settled into a decent anonymity and accepted their reduced status. Many of them disappeared or, tellingly, became adjuncts of state departments.

This national consensus on welfare, which grew out of the particular character of the wartime experience, has now largely collapsed. Charities have helped to fill the gaps. Meanwhile state agencies, such as NHS hospitals, have taken on quasi-charitable tasks. Given the spiralling costs of provision, Britain has reached a curious stage in the evolution of social policy, where the Government wants more from charitable institutions, while charities want more from the Government.

In this ambiguous welfare-world, it has become necessary to use the word "independent" before the name of a non-governmental charity, for it is no longer obvious that a charitable institution is not a government body. To believe that there are two distinct sectors, the state sector paid for by taxation, and the voluntary sector, financed by a variety of means, is rather fanciful. The two sectors have become entangled. Today, charitable donations to NHS hospitals such as Great Ormond Street are providing services which may be seen as the responsibility of the State.

Given the blurring of boundaries between the State and voluntary institutions, the most pressing issue is one identified last year by the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector: "What activities still properly belong within the public sector and should not be performed elsewhere?" It is an issue that Tony Blair has already addressed. Having cast aside Labour's collectivist dogma, he declared in 1994 that the voluntary sector was "not an optional extra but a vital part of our economy". More recently, Peter Mandelson called for a compact between Government and charities and emphasised that Labour saw itself as "an enabler of welfare rather than a provider".

Where this leaves the moving frontier of social provision is unclear. But it seems unlikely that tax exemptions for charitable bodies will be withdrawn. Who in new Labour believes that the Treasury is "the greatest charity of all"?



"Mark my footsteps, good my page, Tread thou in them boldly; Thou shalt find the winter's rage Freeze thy blood less coldly." (Good King Wenceslas)

## Marianne in trousers

In an expanded Europe of historic cultural groupings, France is in a unique position to assert her dominance

minded, in many ways among the best people on earth.

The contrast between northwest Germany and Bavaria is between the Nordic and Protestant and the Catholic and Central European. It was an historical accident that Bavaria did not come to be part of a south central European state with Vienna and Munich as twin capital cities. Prussia and Bavaria were not preordained to win the war of 1866 in which they defeated Bavaria and Austria. After 1870, when his victory over France allowed him to complete the unification of Germany, Bismarck began the *Kulturkampf*, to maintain the dominance of Prussia, Protestantism and the imperial monarchy.

If you look up Germany in *Whitaker's Almanac* for 1990, you find it listed as "the Prussian Empire". That is, indeed, what Bismarck's Germany was.

In 1997 British politics has become predominantly cultural, rather than pragmatic.

The May election was as much an aesthetic as a political rejection of the Conservatives. The Major Government left behind the most favourable economic conditions that have given any incoming Government since the war; if elections were simply concerned with the pocketbook, John Major might still be in Downing Street. New Labour struck the mood of the time. Tony Blair spent his leisure at Oxford as the lead singer of a pop group; aspiring Conservatives, including both Kenneth Clarke and William Hague, were more likely to have spent their university days arguing their way to the presidency of the Union. The election of 1997 was more like a gig than a debate. Youth, modernity, informality were the themes which won the greatest election victory in 90 years.

Germany itself is united by language but has always been divided by culture. Northwest Germany, the Hamburg region, has connections with Britain to the west. The Netherlands to the south and Scandinavia to the north. The people are Protestant, liberal and rather serious.

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The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, was followed by a unique explosion of national grief, something no one would have foreseen, which even now is hard to remember

in its full intensity. She represented some of the same themes as the Blair election victory, the freshness, the desire to modernise old institutions, the frustration the young feel against the old guard. Her life was also perceived as much more compassionate than new Labour itself.

Tony Blair's cultural image does not appeal only to people in Britain, where he remains extremely popular though his Government has had some bad weeks. In this week's opinion poll in *Le Monde* 82 per cent of French people say that they take a "good" or "fairly good" view of Tony Blair, whereas only 11 per cent of the British take a similar view of Lionel Jospin. I doubt if this is an example of British chauvinism. Jospin is the French equivalent of old Labour, and in both countries old-fashioned socialism looks obsolete.

There are six big European countries in the European Union we are trying to put together: Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Spain and eventually Poland. In terms of geography, France, Italy and Spain are Mediterranean countries, whereas Germany, Britain and Poland are Atlantic, North Sea or Baltic. In terms of religion, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and south Germany are all Roman Catholic; Britain and north Germany are Protestant. In terms of recent history, Germany was defeated in 1918 and 1945, France in 1940, Italy withdrew from the Second World War, Spain experienced the catastrophe of the civil war, Poland was occupied by Germany in 1939 and by the Soviet Union after 1945. Britain was victorious in 1918 and 1945, both times depending on the United States, but since 1945 Britain has dissolved the greatest of the modern world empires.

Britain and France have great cultural self-confidence. In the *Le Monde* poll, 70 per cent of the British admired the French quality of *savoir vivre*. Britain has a unique literature,

thanks to Shakespeare; take him away and the corpus of English literature would still be closely comparable to the French. Germany has Goethe, the philosophers and music; Italy has Rome and the Renaissance. European culture has this great historic wealth, but the individual national cultures remain very different.

Britain is significantly different from the continental nations in our closeness to the United States, the length of our democratic tradition and the strength of our individualism. Britain and Ireland are pulled towards American culture by the English language; French, Italian and Spanish are all Latin-based languages.

If one looks at Europe's postwar history from a narrowly economic and political point of view, one may be surprised by the way the French have so often determined policy. German war guilt, and the memory of the Holocaust, have certainly made the Germans reluctant to flaunt their industrial power, but that is waning with the new generation. When one looks at the cultural balance, France's strength becomes less surprising. In population, the 15 EU countries divide into four groups.

The Latin, Roman Catholic or Mediterranean group includes France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, with a combined population of 175 million. The German-speaking group consists of Germany, Austria and Luxembourg and less closely of The Netherlands and part of Belgium; their combined population is 15 million. The English-speaking group consists of the United Kingdom and Ireland, with a population of just over 60 million. Sweden, Denmark and Finland make up a small Scandinavian group with a population of 20 million.

Inside these groups there are big cultural variations, but France is the strongest power in the largest cultural group. The addition of nearly 40 million Catholic Poles, historically suspicious of Germany, can only strengthen French leadership. Germany has neither sought nor received a British alliance to balance the Nordic against the Latin group. There is a *Kulturkampf* inside the European Union, and France is the best-placed nation.

Britain and France have great cultural self-confidence. In the *Le Monde* poll, 70 per cent of the British admired the French quality of *savoir vivre*. Britain has a unique literature,

umany about human rights for Radio 4's *Analysis*. After the programme was broadcast, the BBC received a complaint from the Lord Chancellor that Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, had received more air time. Irwin discovered the outrage after his secretary obtained a transcript of the show and counted the words. If only he had talked in the interview about his wallpaper.

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL, *Man of Power* (volume 27). *Ministers are advised to seek permission before accepting an invitation to sup with the enemy (journalists). Naughtier ministers have resorted to subterfuge by arranging lunch through their constituency offices. When they head for the restaurant, they leave their ministerial cars behind and catch the bus, ensuring that Whitehall's best intelligence network — government chauffeurs — are out of the loop.*

ASHDOWN as Sporty, with the Lord Chancellor as Posh and Speaker Betty Boothroyd as, er, Scary — complete with bare midriff and a portcullis-shaped jewel in her necklace. Betty will love it.

My word!

AFTER the Lord Chancellor confirmed my important story that he has an official Orange Peeler, another curiosity about the Lord Irvine of Lairg has come to my attention. The usually media-shy Irvine agreed to take part in a doc-

• THOSE fading songbirds the Spice Girls will land on MPs' desks today, thanks to the House Magazine. Its Christmas card to Members depicts Westminster Spice: Tony Blair as Ginger, William Hague as Baby and Paddy

"Here he comes — start sneezing"

SOTHEBY'S is having a bad week. After yesterday's wrangle about selling smuggled art, I can now disclose that the auction house has sold a box of documents unaware that it contained rare correspondence from members of the Shelley gang. Lot 185 was

JASPER GERARD

described as little more than a collection of papers with an estimate of just £2,500 to £3,500.

But canny dealers inspected the box before the auction and discovered some gems: an 1840s letter from Mary Shelley, who wrote *Frankenstein*, imploring a biographer not to write an exposé about her late husband Percy. There were also letters between Claire Clairmont — mother of Allegra, Lord Byron's daughter — and E.J. Trelawney. The lot sold for £14,375.

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JASPER GERARD

## From local hero to outcast

Magnus Linklater  
on the tragedy of  
Mohammed Sarwar

Mohammed Sarwar was a great catch for the Labour Party. He was Britain's first Muslim MP, a self-made millionaire, a man to break the mould of old Labour politics, and a symbol of racial tolerance for the new party. The National Executive backed him in a grim fight for the newly created Govan seat against one of its own loyalists, and defended him against charges of vote-rigging in the selection procedure. His political contacts in Pakistan were considered an asset, and his long stint as a Glasgow councillor gave him grassroots credibility. All in all, he seemed the ideal MP for new Labour.

But what looked good on paper failed to measure up on the streets of Glasgow, and Mr Sarwar's arrest and appearance in court yesterday on charges of electoral fraud brings to an end a strange and embarrassing episode from which the party emerges with its image badly damaged. It now regards its sometime favourite son as a pariah, and makes no secret of its wish to be rid of him. Mr Sarwar will face intense pressure to resign so that Govan can find a replacement MP. His Labour membership has been suspended and he has been deprived of the right to represent the party at any level. Rarely can a fall from political grace have been so complete and so brutal.

But if the party believes it can simply wash its hands of this affair, it will have to think again. Mr Sarwar is entitled to feel more than aggrieved over the way he has been so brazenly abandoned, while elsewhere — in Paisley and on Glasgow City Council — allegations of vote-rigging and misconduct go unpunished by anything more than an interminable inquiry. Two other MP's have been suspended (one since reinstated); six councillors are still being investigated; charges that public funds in Paisley have been misappropriated are still unresolved; the party executive seems incapable of clearing out the corrupting elements that continue to stifle politics in the West of Scotland.

The vote-rigging charges against Mr Sarwar are not exactly unfamiliar in the Glasgow area. Trade unionists have regularly been used to rustle up names with which to swing the vote behind their local candidates. It is just one of the charges being investigated in Paisley. In Mr Sarwar's case the allegations involve Pakistani, rather than a trade union network. Until the evidence is heard at his trial we cannot know the truth, but he is at least entitled to ask why the party has failed to punish conduct elsewhere which it now finds, in his case, so unacceptable.

I saw a certain amount of Mr Sarwar both before his selection and during his election campaign. He is not an easy man — prickly, arrogant, intensely ambitious. There is no doubt his achievements as a businessman, starting out selling eggs from door to door and ending with a chain of cash-and-carry warehouses which have made him a wealthy man. Immensely hard-working and committed to the Labour cause, he commands loyalty from a tight-knit group of Pakistani supporters, as well as business associates whom he has helped on the way up.

But despite his long service on the council, he struck me as lacking political experience, short-sighted about his tactics and prone to paranoia. Some of his party aides seemed to verge on the maverick. His was a campaign that clearly needed close monitoring and support from party headquarters.

It was not as if they were ignorant about the problem. Allegations concerning the Govan party lists had already led to a ferocious row at the time of Mr Sarwar's selection as candidate, with the National Executive called in to investigate and adjudicate. Yet the party continued to speak of him as a standard-bearer for the Muslim community, and to predict that he would win by a handsome majority. In the event, his was one of the closest of the Glasgow votes, with the SNP candidate coming within 2,000 votes of victory.

Almost before the dust had settled, new allegations began to circulate, and it was at this point that the party began to distance itself rapidly from this problematic new MP. Whatever is eventually proved against him, the party will have to answer for its failure to detect and deal with a problem it knew existed before it turned into a crisis. It is not only Labour that has been damaged. The Muslim community, which had been led to expect so much, feels itself humiliated.

This week sees the publication of the Scotland Bill. Running through the whole debate will be a question that is increasingly exercising the country: who will be running the new Scotland? Constant reassurances that "a new type of MP" will emerge to ensure that the parliament is not taken over by the old party hegemony are beginning to sound a little thin. There is, instead, every sign that some familiar old names will be moving effortlessly on to the party lists, which are now being drawn up. If Labour can stop this happening, it will have to exercise rather more control than it has been capable of in the past.



## OUR ISLAND STORY

### History has become a battlefield for Britishness

"It is time to rediscover the meaning of being British; to find out who we are through what we have been." Thus Simon Schama, the most distinguished British historian of his generation, justified this week the BBC's millennium *Television History of Britain* which he is to write and present.

History, like any discipline, does not necessarily need any justification other than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Liberal learning is a good in itself. Inescapably, however, it is a tool for making sense of the present. Equally inescapably, that tool becomes a weapon in the hands of factions battling to define the nation's identity. George Orwell, writing nearly 50 years ago, recognised that he who controlled the past, controlled the future. In the current battle of Britishness it is the past which is the most fiercely contested terrain.

Another distinguished British historian, Jonathan Clark, who like Simon Schama is currently teaching in America, has produced a dense but illuminating guide to the battlefield in an essay for the *Historical Journal*. Although its audience, and language, are academic, its insights are of universal interest. Dr Clark takes as his starting point the declining interest in British history in the US and blames compatriots who have provided American, and indeed British, readers with "inadequate versions of British history". Their inadequacies, however, have consequences far beyond the New World's ivory towers.

Dr Clark explains how a particular approach to British history which seeks to deconstruct British identity and render it an "invention" and the product of "imagination", serves a specific ideological purpose. Historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and Linda Colley as well as David Cannadine have, he argues, tried to explain British identity in terms which call for a radical renovation of native traditions. These historians have tried to explain how the furniture with which we have all grown up no longer fits our circumstances.

Dr Colley's *Britons*, one of the most influential historical works of the Nineties, argues that British identity is an artificial construct built in the 18th century, a keep which encircles the four nations of the United Kingdom to defend their Protestant faith against continental enemies. Her work has encouraged those who believe that the time has come for a new design. The sense that Britain's forms of government, still recognisably an inheritance from our ancestors, are no longer adequate, also informs David Cannadine's work. Dr Clark crystallises Dr Cannadine's argument as the

view that "aristocratic values were a continual check on British modernisation". For Dr Cannadine that modernisation is clearly incomplete: he argues that the inevitable rescue from the ruins of decayed Britishness will be European integration.

This is poor politics built on worse history. The history-with-a-purpose of Colley and Cannadine, the notions of automatic adolescence and in-built inevitability in their work can be contrasted with a different approach. There is another school of history which owes something to the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley, something to the sensibility of Samuel Coleridge, a little to the political insights of Michael Oakeshott and a great deal to the example of R.G. Collingwood. It is a school which seeks to understand historical actors in their own terms rather than as *dramatis personae* in another's epic, which sees political action as an autonomous activity in its own right rather than a medium for explaining theories of class, gender or national emancipation. Its special power at this moment in its deliberate, devastating critique of those who believe there is only one course for Britain — break-up and then absorption into Europe.

There is an alternative narrative of Britain, which locates a special sense of collective British identity and destiny well before the formal Act of Union in 1707. Any audience of *Henry V* will recognise that sense already clearly understood in Shakespeare's depiction of an army where Scot, Welshman and Englishman are bound in a common endeavour. Dr Clark has himself shown the weakness in historical analysis of the 17th and 18th centuries which sees Britain, by virtue of a series of revolutions, setting out on a course of liberal improvement whose trajectory takes us in a direction congenital to today's constitutional radicals.

Dr Clark's interpretation of Britain's past will not convince all, but it is a vital corrective to an interpretation which has become a new orthodoxy. The work of Colley, Cannadine and their associates in providing an organising narrative has helped to popularise history and given commentators a big picture to admire, or depurate. In an academic environment overpopulated with those who over-specialise, they deserve praise for that. But in the attempt to understand our past no one school should dominate, especially one driven by a very political sense of what we should be. As we approach the millennium, history, of all disciplines, should be our protection against those who see only one model in our island story.

## IMPRUDENT PRUDENTIAL

### The FSA will have to hit where it hurts

Howard Davies has begun his tenure at the new City watchdog, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), with a bang. His report on mis-selling at the Prudential Corporation must be the one of the most savage indictments of a City institution ever delivered.

The Prudential suffered from "deep-seated and longstanding management failures" and had "cultural disposition against compliance" which led to "continuing persistent and serious breaches... across major areas of its business". All in all, its conduct "has fallen substantially below the standards that the public has a right to expect from a regulated firm".

The Prudential, which owns 4 per cent of British industry and is perhaps the most famous name in British insurance, has been labelled as cynical and exploitative. Under its controversial former chief executive, Mick Newmarch, it chose to be regulated by a body, the Securities and Investments Board, which had no power to fine, unlike the Personal Investment Authority, which regulates the Prudential's rivals. As a result, Mr Davies can, for the moment, do no more than "name and shame".

But the Prudential seems to exude little of the latter. Mr Newmarch's successor, Sir Peter

Davies, is featuring in his own television advertisements as "the man from the 'Pru'", in an attempt to fashion a wholesome image for a company that recommended many of its clients to buy financial products that were not suitable for their circumstances. Sir Peter is now trying to tackle the problems that have beset his business — but not before time.

The Prudential will soon come under the ambit of a regulator that does have the power to fine. That will be welcome for a company that, in the past, has appeared more concerned with its own prosperity than with that of its customers. When Mr Davies can hit companies like the Prudential where it hurts, he should be able to achieve more than embarrassment.

Embarrassment is no longer an effective sanction in the City. There is barely a major insurance company that has not been named and shamed by its legal regulator. Customers in search of a wholly reputable provider are understandably frustrated. Yet these scandals have come at a time when the Government is planning to transfer many of its responsibilities — such as pensions and long-term care insurance — to the private sector. The FSA will have to work fast to reassure customers that the industry is now up to scratch.

## HIGH SPIRITS

### The best central heating is proof against the cold

Nelly the elephant may be cold, but in Moscow she is certainly happy. Her trainers are helping her and her fellow circus pachyderms through the present cold snap with a warming bucket of vodka. The effect can only be imagined: elephants, like human beings, become frisky, relaxed and uninhibited when generously plied with drink. But when a three-tonne elephant takes a fancy to the ballerina on its back or topples off its circus stand, the consequences are far weightier than the friendly pinch on the bottom (or the attempt to conduct a brass band) that results from a presidential indulgence in Russia's favourite tipple.

Russians are sentimental people, who pamper their pets, their children and themselves when winter sets in. And to most Russians, nothing can rival the national elixir that warms, cheers and cures. Vodka is at once a folk medicine, a hallucinogen revealing the mysteries of the soul, and a lubricant more commonly applied to sophisticated machinery than any conventional liquid.

When coughs and colds set in, Russians massage vodka into the chest, and dose themselves with generous medicinal quantities. The aura itself has curative qualities, they maintain — though indistinguishable

from the natural aroma of a crowded Russian bus. When the winter stove is stoked high, the tea is sizzling in the samovar and a Russian's thoughts turn to higher things, vodka is the potion that turns doggerel into poetry. When the car freezes down in deepest Siberia, a little vodka applied to the engine and set alight will do wonders for the ignition.

To a Russian, vodka has almost mythical qualities, and the greater the amount on hand, the larger the myth. In vain do doctors, Russian Baptists and sportsmen rail against the evils of drink. To no avail have successive Russian Governments encouraged the cultured consumption of wine as a substitute for the potent water of life. There is no substitute in the Russian soul or shop for vodka: even Bolshoi dancers swear that their performance is unpaired by its consumption. Whereas wine or beer will ruin their jets.

The cold brings out the bottles as well as the fur hats, and Russians look forward to winter with anticipation. The Moscow elephants must relish their warming buckets — though no trainer who calls himself a Russian would not also generously test the fluid to see that it was the real thing.

Yours faithfully,  
DOROTHY DRAKE  
11 Queen Parade,  
Harrowgate HG1 5PW  
December 15.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

### Likely winners and losers in review of welfare benefits

From the Director General of Age Concern England

Sir, Over 60 per cent of the UK's disabled people are pensioners and are likely to bear the brunt of the rumoured £2 billion cut in spending on the disabled (reports, December 13, 15 and 16). Age Concern is receiving calls from distressed ill and disabled older people who deserve immediate reassurance from the Government that they will receive the money they need to survive.

In its determination to prune the welfare budget, the Government has already targeted pensioners. Over one million pensioners are not claiming as much as the £1.7 billion in benefits they are entitled to, yet the Government has recently decided to reduce the period that benefit claims can be backdated from up to a year in some cases, down to just one month. This, linked to backdating restrictions from the previous Government, will take £77 million per year out of the poorest pensioners' pockets.

On Thursday, a parliamentary standing committee will discuss plans to restrict full council-tax benefit for people living in houses worth £12,000 or more. This will save only £15 million in the first year, but will hit around 65,000 people, 30,000 of them pensioners who are managing on low incomes but find themselves living in homes that have gone up in value.

### Labour 'rebels'

From Mr Philip Cowley

Sir, You reported ("Usual suspects joined by new Labour rebels", December 12) that of the 47 Labour MPs who voted against the Government on lone-parent benefit 12 were newly elected. In fact the number was 14, your correspondents having missed Ann Cryer and Jonathan Shaw.

The oversight of Ann Cryer is important, because of all the newly elected Labour women MPs, she was the only one to vote against the Government. Initial analysis of the voting demonstrates that male Labour MPs were more likely to vote against the cut in lone-parent benefits than were female MPs. And Labour's newly elected women MPs were less likely to vote against the cut than those Labour women MPs who had been in the House before the 1997 election.

Before the last election I co-wrote a paper with my colleagues Professor Philip Norton and Matthew Bailey entitled *Blair's Bastards*, which examined the voting behaviour of Labour MPs in the 1992 Parliament and identified those MPs most likely to cause trouble to any incoming Labour government. The paper was criticised by the Labour leadership who described it as "academic nonsense", but it proved remarkably accurate at identifying those who would cause trouble for the Government last week.

Of the 32 MPs I identified and who are still in the House, 22 voted against the Government, and seven abstained, leaving just 3 who voted for the Government. The 22 included Alice Mahon and Malcolm Chisholm, who both resigned from the Government in order to vote against the cut.

We ended *Blair's Bastards* by saying that whilst there were some Labour MPs who were clearly ministers-in-waiting, there were also those who were rebels-in-waiting. Last week, they stopped waiting.

Yours faithfully,  
PHILIP COWLEY,  
University of Hull,  
Department of Politics,  
Hull HU6 7RX  
p.j.cowley@pol.ac.uk  
December 15.

### Off-key remarks

From Miss Beryl M. Goldsmith

Sir, When is a typist not a typist? When she is rather more than some one sitting in front of a machine with plugs in her ears, bashing out her master's words?

On two occasions this week your Diary referred to two senior political assistants in the House of Commons as typists. Miss Claire Gagnon (December 12) and myself (December 10) are amused rather than indignant. But our masters — neither of whom employs a "typist" — are not best pleased.

Yours faithfully,  
BERYL M. GOLDSMITH  
(Personal Assistant to Lord Tebbit and Parliamentary Assistant to Mr Michael Trend, MP,  
34 Thomas More House,  
Barbican, EC2Y 8BT.  
December 12.

### Sense of direction

From Mrs Dorothy Drake

Sir, Perhaps men do learn to pay attention to direction more than women (Science Briefing, December 8; letter, December 11).

My husband has no use for road maps. When finding his way in this country and in Europe all he needs is the answer to two questions: Where's the sun? Where's the sea?

He's not bad at reaching his destination — except after dark.

Yours faithfully,  
DOROTHY DRAKE  
11 Queen Parade,  
Harrowgate HG1 5PW  
December 15.

The change of Government has done little to improve life for the poor pensioners.

Yours sincerely,  
SALLY GREENGROSS,  
Director General,  
Age Concern England,  
Astral House,  
1288 London Road, SW16 4ER.  
December 16.

From Mr Nigel H. Harris, FRCS

Sir, It is widely believed that a Government review of disablement benefits is taking place. The anticipated outcry will be premature until all the facts are known. I will refer to one example.

I examine about 400 individuals a year in receipt of incapacity benefit, following musculo-skeletal injury, who are in fact perfectly fit for alternative employment. They have either been involved in a road traffic accident or sustained an injury at work, and they are making a claim for compensation. The majority allege they are unfit for work and, after a reasonably stringent DSS disablement benefit medical examination, they are provided with incapacity benefit. This precludes them from applying for work. For many, in fact, receipt of the benefit is a positive disincentive to even think about a job.

It is very rare indeed for a musculoskeletal injury to cause a person to be

totally and permanently incapable of any work, although I appreciate that some will be restricted on the open job market. Clearly they should be registered unemployed and actually seeking work, and incapacity benefit should only be for those considered to be unemployable on medical grounds.

The fit-for-work disabled should be provided with a certificate to indicate the type of work for which they are suitable. This might be linked to schemes whereby employers have a statutory duty to employ a certain percentage of disabled people.

I predict that if some such measures were implemented, the £8 billion overall cost of incapacity benefit would be halved, and the true level of unemployment made clear.

Yours faithfully,  
NIGEL H. HARRIS  
(Consultant orthopaedic surgeon,  
72 Harley Street, W1N 1AE.

From Mr Christopher Slade

Sir, Is the Government (and those who vote with it) targeting for benefits cut the very poor, their children and the handicapped because they are people who either do not have a vote or are unlikely to use it?

Yours faithfully,  
C. J. SLADE,  
13 Church Road,  
Maiden Newton, Dorset DT2 0AB.

### EU option for Turkey and Cyprus

From Mr Roger Forster

Sir, I write from a church which has had a number of contacts with Turkey over the years. One of our members worked for the European Union office in Ankara and contributed to a book on the prospects for Turkish membership of the EU.

More recently some of our members have been walking through Turkey as part of the Reconciliation Walk, a walk from Cologne to Jerusalem on the 900th anniversary of the First Crusade, to express regret for the atrocities committed to Muslim, Jew and Christian alike during the Crusades. At that stage of course it was the Europeans who conducted a campaign of murder and rape across Turkish territory.

It is now more than 34 years since the EEC signed the Ankara Agreement with Turkey to establish closer bonds between the Turkish people and the peoples brought together in the European Economic Community. The objective of Turkish accession to the Community was already stated in 1963 and has been restated by the European side in agreements since.

This is not to deny that Turkey has significant problems. Yet it seems to us that the equivocal attitude taken by Europe to Turkey over the years has been singularly unhelpful to the Turkish authorities who have tried to address those problems. Turks look to friends for support when they face difficulties. It seems reasonable for them to expect it from partner states who sign such agreements. Such a sense of support from Europe has been regrettably missing over the years.

Turkey has been incontrovertibly part of European history for centuries. As long as the Turks wish to pursue the European option, we would like to put it on record that there are Euro-

pean churches which support their right to do so.

Yours sincerely,  
ROGER FORSTER  
(Leader),  
Ichthus Christian Fellowship,  
107 Stanstead Road,  
Forest Hill, SE23 1HH.  
December 14.

From Mr Tony Mifsud

Sir, In your leader today, "Blair's X factor", you validly anticipate some momentous decisions over EMU and EU enlargement during Britain's presidency in the new year. But I submit you are not right to say the decision to include Cyprus in the first round of new applicants for membership is "unwise".

This commitment was undertaken by the Council of Ministers of the EU in 1993, following approval of the customs union with Turkey. It specified that negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus would start within six months of the intergovernmental conference which ended in Amsterdam last summer.

The prospect of Cyprus joining the EU was greeted by President Clinton's Special Envoy for Cyprus, Richard Holbrooke, as the biggest new factor in the 30-year stalemate. Furthermore, Cyprus fulfilled all the economic, cultural and other criteria for membership. Many thought at the time that the decision indicated also a wish to avoid Cyprus becoming a hostage for European membership to Ankara, and a reminder to Turkey that it had not moved enough towards a settlement despite numerous resolutions and great efforts at the United Nations and in Europe.

Yours faithfully,  
TONY MITSUDIS,  
70 Cissbury Ring South, NI2 7BD.  
December 13.

### Maxwell connection

From Mr Bruce V. Jones

Sir, The letter from Mr Joe Haines (December 10) does rather provoke the comment: "Come off it, Joe." I too am one of the 25,000 ex-Maxwell employees. I did at least last six months until I resigned, but in typical Captain Boyle style he roared: "You can't resign; you work for me; you're fired." Apart from that we finally parted on good terms.

The truth is it was generally known by people who had come up against him in a working context what Maxwell was like. I witnessed many of our political great-and-good in his office and was amazed by the sycophancy and toady behaviour: to have seen Maxwell and George Brown together, as a mutual admiration society, was

far from uplifting.

It was these people who allowed Maxwell to thrive for so long. The world of political "lullabies" breeds and accepts confidence tricksters like Maxwell: all its members are guilty. Both Labour and Conservatives were seduced from sponsoring sporting events.

Yours faithfully,  
R. G. HENDERSON,  
Orchard House, Little Fencote,  
Northallerton DL7 0RR.  
richard.henderson2@compuserve.com  
December 15.

From Dr Henry Hardy



## COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
December 17: His Excellency Archbishop Pablo Puentec was received in audience by The Queen and presented the Letters of Recall of his predecessor and his own Letter of Credence as Apostolic Nuncio from the Holy See to the Court of St James's.

Mr J.R. Young (Deputy Under-Secretary and Chief Clerk, Foreign and Commonwealth Office) was present.

Mr Justice Sullivan was received by The Queen upon his appointment as a Justice of the High Court when Her Majesty conferred upon him the honour of Knighthood and invested him with the Insignia of a Knight Bachelor.

The Queen held a Council at 12.30 pm.

There were present: The Rt Hon Ann Taylor MP (President), the Rt Hon Hardie (Lord Advocate), the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP (Secretary of State for the Home Department), the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP (President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry), the Rt Hon Frank Dobson MP (Secretary of State for Health), the Rt Hon Dr Jack Cunningham MP (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and the Rt Hon Tom Clarke MP (Minister of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport).

Mr Nigel Nicholls was in attendance as Clerk of the Council.

The Rt Hon Ann Taylor MP had an audience of Her Majesty before the Council.

The Earl of Airlie KT had an audience of The Queen, delivered up his Wand and Insignia of Office as Lord Chamberlain and the Badge of the Royal Victorian Order and took leave upon relinquishing his appointment as Lord Chamberlain when Her Majesty invested him with the Royal Victorian Chain.

By command of Her Majesty, Vice Admiral Sir James Weatherhead (Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps) called upon His Excellency Mr Vanias Markides at 93 Park Street, London W1, this morning in order to bid farewell to His Excellency upon relinquishing his appointment as High Commissioner for the Republic of Cyprus in London.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
December 17: The Princess Royal, Patron, National Association of the Children of Courage Awards at Westminster Abbey, London SW1.

## Today's royal engagements

The Duke of York will attend the Year of the Seafarers finale concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London SE1 at 7.15 in aid of the King George's Fund for Sailors.

Princess Margaret will attend a performance of *Cinderella* by the Adventures in Motion Pictures Company at the Piccadilly Theatre at 7.25 in aid of the Dancers' Trust.

## Commemoration service

Mrs Dorothy L. Sayers  
A service was held yesterday at St Anne's Soho, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the death of Miss Dorothy L. Sayers. The Rev Fred Stevens officiated, assisted by the Right Rev Lord Runcie, the Right Rev Richard Watson and Prebendary Gerard Irvine. Miss Sheila Mitchell read from *Dante's Paradise* and Canon John Thurmer gave an address. Members of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society attended.

ciation of Victims Support Schemes, this morning attended a meeting of the Advisory Board at Church House, Westminster, London SW1.

Her Royal Highness, Patron, SENSE - the National Deafblind and Rubella Association this afternoon attended a Lunch at Rutland Trust plc, Rutland House, Rutland Gardens, London SW7.

The Princess Royal, President, Animal Health Trust, this evening attended the Christmas Celebration Dinner at the Banqueting House, Whitehall, London SW1.

ST JAMES'S PALACE  
December 17: The Prince of Wales, President, this morning met members of The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum at St James's Palace to review aspects of the past year's activities.

His Royal Highness, Colonel-in-Chief, The Royal Regiment of Wales (24th/41st Foot) this afternoon visited The Queen's Guard at St James's Palace.

The Prince of Wales, President, The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture, afterwards presented Diplomas at an Awards Ceremony at St James's Palace.

His Royal Highness, Colonel-in-Chief, The Royal Regiment of Wales (24th/41st Foot) this afternoon visited The Queen's Guard at St James's Palace.

The Prince of Wales, President, The Prince of Wales's Institute of Architecture, afterwards presented Diplomas at an Awards Ceremony at St James's Palace.

His Royal Highness, Patron, this evening attended a performance of *Verdi's Requiem* at the Royal Festival Hall, London SE1, on the occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Philharmonia Chorus.

KENSINGTON PALACE  
December 17: The Duke of Gloucester, Commissioner, English Heritage, this morning attended a Commissioners' meeting at Fortress House, Savile Row, London W1.

The Duchess of Gloucester, Sponsor, M&G Gloucester, this afternoon received Commander T.A. Cunningham RN upon relinquishing his appointment as Commanding Officer and Commander T. Fraser RN upon assuming the appointment.

Her Royal Highness this evening attended a "Carols by Candlelight" Service in aid of the Honeypot Home Charity at St Luke's Church, Sydney Street, London SW3.

ST JAMES'S PALACE  
December 17: The Duchess of Kent this morning presented the Children of Courage Awards at Westminster Abbey, London SW1.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
December 17: The Princess Royal, Patron, National Association of the Children of Courage Awards at Westminster Abbey, London SW1.

## Birthdays today

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, KG, 74; Miss Frances Crook, director, Howard League for Penal Reform, 45; Mr David Crossland, chairman, Airtime St; Lieutenant Commander I.E. Fraser, VC, 77; Mr Christopher Fry, dramatist, 90; Pamela Lady Harriet, 62; Professor M.J. Harrison, Vice-Chancellor, Wolverhampton University, 57; Miss Rosemary Leach, actress, 62; Lord Loughborough, 72; Lord Merlin, 77; Mr J.C.S. Mott, civil engineer, 71; Mr Albert Parry, former director-general, National Criminal Intelligence Service, 56; Miss Annette Page, ballerina, 65; Major-General R. Bernard Penfold, 81; Dr Joyce Reynolds, FBA, Roman historian, 79; Mr Keith Richard, Rolling Stones guitarist, 54; Lord Robens of Wokingham, 87; Miss Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, tennis player, 26; The Earl of Shrewsbury, 45; Mr Steven Spielberg, film-maker, 50; Mr Joe Wade, trade unionist, 78; The Right Rev R.K. Williamson, Bishop of Southwark, 72; Mr W.H. Yates, former senior partner, Knight Frank and Rutley, 62.

## Luncheon

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Miss Angela Rippon was the guest speaker at a Christmas luncheon of the London Chamber of Commerce and industry held yesterday at the Savoy Hotel. Sir Brian Jenkins, president of the chamber, was the host. Afterwards a raffle and auction was held in aid of Childline.

## Church news

### New bishops

The Rev Geoffrey Stephen Pedley, a Residential Canon at Durham Cathedral, to be Suffragan Bishop of Lancaster (Diocese of Blackburn) in succession to the Rev John (Jack) Nichols, who has become Bishop of Sheffield.

The Ven Michael Arthur Hill, Archdeacon of Berkshire, to be Suffragan Bishop of Buckingham (Diocese of Oxford) in succession to the Right Rev Colin James Bennett, who has become Bishop of Coventry.

The Leverhulme Trust agreed, at their recent meeting, to award the following grants to institutions:

Research: Economics, business studies, industrial relations

University of Nottingham, Mr T. Buck, Dr J. Filatsev, Russian companies with traded shares: corporate governance and strategies, £69,920 over three years

Birkbeck College, Professor J. Michie, Queen's University of Belfast, Dr M. Sheehan, Labour market dynamics and innovation, £94,350 over three years

University of East Anglia, Dr J. Brown, Phenotypic plasticity of stress sensitivity in early life stages of turbot, £63,670 over two years

University of Wales, Bangor, Professor R. Thorpe, Dr A. Malhotra, Far-East Asian pif viper venom biology, £69,350 over three years

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, Dr G. Frankel, Sir Barbirolli's Hospital - Medical School, University of London, Dr M. Pallen, University of Birmingham, Dr S. Knott, The SPEC addresses the importance of cell-cell interactions, £55,000 over 12 months

Research: Basic sciences

University of Edinburgh, Professor J. Newbold, Professor A. J. Reynolds, Professor C. T. Evans, Dr S. J. Leybourne, Econometric issues in the analysis of efficiency in futures and forward markets, £22,880 over 12 months

School of Oriental and African Studies, Ms S. Riehl, Vietnamese rural credit innovations and implications for women's credit access, £1,900 (extension)

University of Stirling, Dr R. Ball, Dr D. King, Private finance initiative: economic and managerial implications, £33,300 over two years

University of Strathclyde, Professor R. MacDonald, Divisia and time varying discounting variables in the UK economy, £24,520 over 12 months

Department of Applied Economics, University of Cambridge, Dr S. N. Solomon, Impact of weather shocks on European economies, 1970-1993, £39,020 over one and a half years

National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Mr N. Oulton, The productivity performance of the UK electricity supply industry, £87,700 over one and a half years

Research: Law, politics

University of Leicester, Dr M. King, The policing of public order in "post-socialist" countries: Hungary and Lithuania, 200,000 lestones

Kingsgate University, Dr B. Brivati, Modernisation in the general election campaigns of the Labour Party since 1945, £57,870 over two years

Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, Dr E. V. FitzGerald, Trends in the manufacturing terms of trade and the developing countries, £27,940 over 12 months (extension)

Research: Social sciences (including anthropology, geography, social psychology)

University of Stirling, Dr McLean, The construction of national identity

in the Museum of Scotland, £54,625 over two years

Orbital, Mrs Mary and Mr Peter College, Dr H. Spiegel, Mapping the changing Civil Parishes of England and Wales, 1880-1974, £35,980 over nine months

Research: Medicine, health

King's College London, Dr M. J. Lawrence, Dr D. J. Brown, Novel lipid analogues for production of long-circulating vesicles, £94,350 over three years

University of Bristol, Dr D. Williams, DNA-based endocrinology as therapeutics, £85,920 over three years

University of Edinburgh, Dr D. Charlesworth, DNA sequence variation in the evolution of Roman Britain, £60,000 over three years

University of Exeter, Dr D. B. Wright, Can postenvelope information eliminate memories of the past, £69,250 over three years

University of Sheffield, Dr D. Williams, DNA-based endocrinology as therapeutics, £85,920 over three years

University of Edinburgh, Dr D. Charlesworth, DNA sequence variation in the evolution of Roman Britain, £60,000 over three years

University of Exeter, Dr A. Usher, Mill-Klein magnetometry studies of the quantum hall effect, £64,520 over three years

University of Nottingham, Dr M. M. Maitland, The application of hydrogen bonding to the control of macromolecular structure, £25,350 over three years

University of York, Dr A. Parsons, A radical approach to medicinally important antibiotics, £27,000 over 12 months

Research: Applied sciences (including architecture)

University College London, Dr S. R. Arridge, Ms J. A. Schnabel, Shape analysis of human teeth, £69,440 over two years

University of Aberdeen, Dr C. S. Woodward, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Dr C. Gibbons, Hydrological disturbance and ecological response in headwater streams, £53,380 over two years

Research: Humanities

University of Strathclyde, Professor T. M. Devine, The Catholic Irish in Western Lowland Scotland, 1850-1920, £72,320 over three years

Royal Holloway, Dr B. Taylor, A study of the enlightenment contribution to 18th century feminism, £59,350 over three years

University of Wales College of Cardiff, Dr A. Whittle, Neolithic lifeways and ritual mortuary assemblages from southern Britain, £61,180 over three years

American University of Beirut, Professor H. Seelen, Beitrage zur antiken und soziologischen Bedeutung der Kollektiv- und sozialen Gruppeninteraktionen, £59,340 over three years

Research: Fine arts

Royal College of Music, Dr P. Hewitt, Surgeries for the Junior Department (ext), £31,550 over two years

Queen's University of Belfast, Dr C. Williams, The synthesis of processes

University of East Anglia, Dr J. Brown, with a novel technique using *in vitro* translocation, £53,720 over 12 months

Orbital, Mrs Mary and Mr Peter College, Dr H. Spiegel, Mapping the changing Civil Parishes of England and Wales, 1880-1974, £35,980 over nine months

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## NEWS

## Blair firm on welfare plan

■ Tony Blair told Labour MPs that internal revolts and fear of unpopularity would not deflect him from reforming the welfare state. He warned those upset by the cut in benefits for single mothers that there would be still harder decisions to come, and he attacked MPs who handed propaganda gifts to the Tories. .... Page 1

## New embarrassment for Robinson

■ Geoffrey Robinson faced fresh embarrassment over his financial affairs when it was disclosed that he was reported to the Bank of England in 1980 on suspicion of breaching exchange control regulations. Sir Michael Edwards, then chairman of BL, is understood to have expressed concerns that Mr Robinson may have moved tens of thousands of pounds. .... Page 1

## Bombers' Christmas

Three IRA bombers, each a high-risk prisoner serving multiple life sentences at the Maze prison, are being allowed home for Christmas and the New Year. .... Page 1

## Shadow shuffle

William Hague shuffled his team after Labour protested at a Shadow Minister's links to a chain of nursing homes which they said paid low wages. .... Page 2

## Bookies catch cold

Bookmakers responded to the Siberian conditions by cutting the odds on a white Christmas from 4/1 to 2/1 despite forecasters' predictions that warmer weather was on the way. .... Page 3

## Sarwar in court

Mohammed Sarwar, the suspended Labour MP for Glasgow Govan, appeared in court to face charges of election fraud, attempting to pervert the course of justice. .... Page 4

## Clark 'teased'

Alan Clark, the Conservative MP and diarist, loves to be "naughty and famous" but is not prepared to be teased by a newspaper, a court was told. .... Page 5

## Private moments

Some of the public's most private moments are to be broadcast in a new spate of fly-on-the-wall documentaries to capitalise on the popularity of "voyeuristic" television. .... Page 6

## Hague escapes from strippers

■ William Hague's arrival for his pre-wedding celebrations was delayed when three strippers showed him their charms on the doorstep of the Conservative Carlton Club. The Tory leader made a getaway as the girls shed fur coats and maces in front of him and his fiancée. The three women had been put up to the stunt by a cable television company. .... Page 1



The surface of Europa, a moon of Jupiter, taken from the Galileo spacecraft. The white and blue areas have been covered by ice particles

## Betjeman love

A previously unknown poem dedicated by Sir John Betjeman to his unattainable love, Myfanwy Piper, has been discovered in a book on Sir John Soane. .... Page 1

## Dome secrecy

Peter Mandelson should spend more time answering MPs' questions about the Millennium Dome, according to a report attacking the secrecy surrounding the project. .... Page 9

## Injury fund

The Government is to create a "public interest fund" to pay where the State has caused injury through negligence. .... Page 12

## Warm front

Flying in the face of scientific research, millions of Russians, including some of their pets, are getting through the cold snap with the help of vodka. .... Page 13

## 'Fatty' Jackal

Carlos the Jackal, on trial for triple murder in a Paris court, has angrily rejected suggestions that he is being nicknamed "Fatty" as a schoolboy set him on the path of international terrorism. .... Page 14

## Guns in paradise

A long-running dispute between a Welsh expatriate couple and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, erupted in gunfire when shots were fired in the office of the brother of the Prime Minister. .... Page 17

**Trains:** Angel Trains, the money spinning rolling stock company born from the British Rail privatisation, is to change hands again. This time it is being sold on by a Japanese bank. .... Page 25

**Pay off:** Richard Oster is to leave Cookson, the industrial group of which he is chairman, by mutual consent. He will receive a £2.9 million pay off. .... Page 48

**Healthcare:** Guardian Royal Exchange is to pay £435 million for PWP, which has 26 per cent of the healthcare market. .... Page 25

**Markets:** The FTSE 100 fell 12.6 points to 5190.8. The trade-weighted sterling index rose from 103.0 to 103.1 after rising from \$1.6335 to \$1.6457 and from DM2.9151 to DM2.9165. .... Page 28

**Football:** Manchester United have been drawn against Monaco in the European Cup quarter-finals. In other competitions Chelsea play Real Betis and Aston Villa play Atlético Madrid. .... Page 48

**Rugby union:** English clubs are prepared to withdraw from the Heineken Cup, the leading competition in Europe, next season unless its structure is changed. .... Page 48

**Boating:** Kevin Kelley, facing Nassem Hamed at Madison Square Garden, cannot understand why a Brooklyn boxer should get second billing to a Briton. .... Page 46

**Rugby league:** The British amateur association has appointed Jackie Sheldon as its first national development officer for the women's game. .... Page 42

**Medical report:** Dr Thomas Sturteveld reports on red wine, smoking, sleeping policemen, scanners and the Two Fat Ladies. .... Page 18

**Shalom:** The murder of an Israeli soldier by Hamas led his mother to a peace mission. .... Page 19

**Not forever:** Diamonds and a material girl can spell trouble at the end of an affair. .... Page 19

**Lads' love:** Since singer Louise Westenra has pulled off a marketing tour de force which makes her a favourite with children, mums, dads and the libidinous lads. .... Page 36

**Winter wonderland:** At the Birmingham Repertory Theatre they're basking in the warm glow of a £5.7 million Arts Council windfall. How it will be spent. .... Page 37

**Life-enhancing:** Times reviewers discuss the books that have most influenced them. .... Pages 38, 39

**Alone again:** Heading the week's movie releases is *Home Alone 3*, now with a new leading man-child, but with all the same old formatted excesses. .... Page 34

**Souped up:** However the future may judge Andy Warhol, the giant of Pop Art, a new show in Dublin suggests that for the present we are still impressed. .... Page 35

**Lads' love:** Since singer Louise Westenra has pulled off a marketing tour de force which makes her a favourite with children, mums, dads and the libidinous lads. .... Page 36

**Winter wonderland:** At the Birmingham Repertory Theatre they're basking in the warm glow of a £5.7 million Arts Council windfall. How it will be spent. .... Page 37

**Numbers shrill:** Why do accountants fail to take senior management to task for their performances? .... Page 33

**TOMORROW**

**IN THE TIMES**

**■ MEDIA**  
One hour of Men Behaving Badly? Why is the Christmas TV schedule so bad?

**■ EDUCATION**  
Will the Schools Bill really give parents a voice in their children's education?

**Medical report:** Dr Thomas Sturteveld reports on red wine, smoking, sleeping policemen, scanners and the Two Fat Ladies. .... Page 18

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## WILLIAM REES-MOGG

The Franco-German alliance is a marriage in which Marriage may lack the physical strength but still wears cultural trousers. .... Page 20

## FRANK PROCHASKA

Denying tax exemptions to all charitable institutions would mean that many would close, and others would never emerge. .... Page 20

## PETER RIDDELL

The Nellie committee on Standards in Public Life is asking the right questions about party funding. But the consensual paper issued yesterday underlines how hard it will be to produce answers which command cross-party support. .... Page 20

## JOHN BRYANT

Sport has always had its helping of fat boys and, as long as they have been able to produce great performances, they have been loved and respected by players and spectators alike. .... Page 20

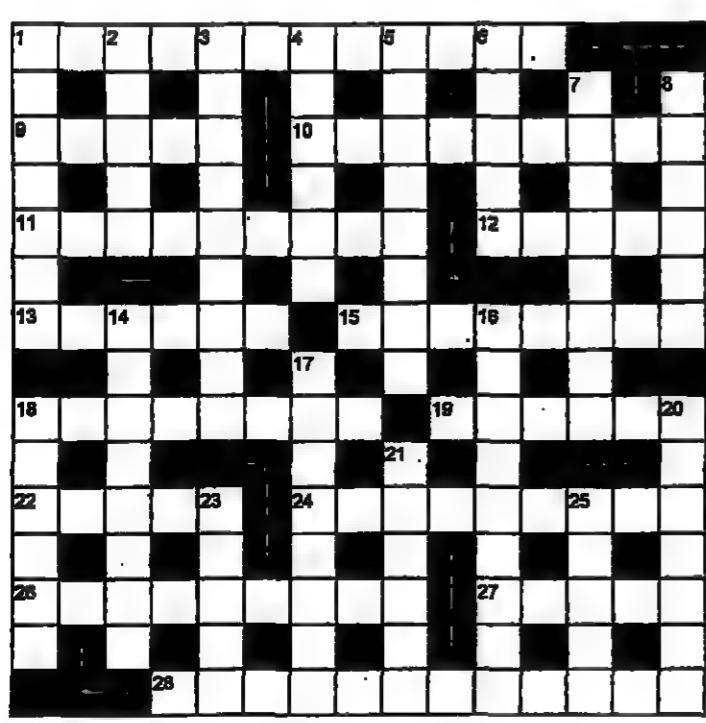
## RUDOLF BAHRO

Märkisch intellectual Richard Vernon, actor Nicholas Polunin, explorer Barry Brook, musicologist. .... Page 21

## WELFARE

Welfare benefits; labour rebels; recovering those lost at sea; EU option for Turkey and Cyprus; working for Maxwell; Britannia; beef; opera committee. .... Page 21

## THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,666



## WEATHER INFORMATION

**Latest Road and Weather conditions:**  
UK Weather: All regions 0236 444 9110  
UK Roads - All regions 0236 401 610  
M25 0236 401 746  
M25 and Link Roads 0236 401 262  
M25 and M40 0236 401 910  
Continental Europe 0236 401 910  
Channel crossing 0236 401 280  
Measuring at Heathrow & Gatwick airports 0236 407 502

**Weather by Fax:**  
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THURSDAY DECEMBER 18 1997

Royal Bank buys leasing group

## Angel Trains earns £400m for Nomura

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY  
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

NOMURA International is to make a profit of almost £400 million on the sale of Angel Train Contracts, the privatised rolling stock leasing company, it emerged yesterday.

Nomura and its consortium partners, who acquired Angel from the Government just over two years ago, is selling the business to the Royal Bank of Scotland for £395 million.

Although Nomura paid the Government £996 million, it is understood to have subsequently earned some £690 million through securitisation of existing leasing contracts, giving a "clean" profit of £300 million on yesterday's disposal.

John Prudeaux, a former British Rail director, is expected to earn £15 million for his 5 per cent shareholding in the consortium. Dr Prudeaux, a train buff who is thought to have made some £80 million after selling most of his stake in Angel last year, is expected to remain with the company.

Dr Prudeaux, an author of several guides for train enthusiasts and former managing director of British Rail's InterCity division, was once tipped as a future chairman of British Rail, but left the nationalised industry after clashing with fellow directors over plans for the Channel Tunnel rail link.

Nomura has an 85 per cent stake in Angel. The rest is held by Babcock & Brown, the US consulting engineering firm.

The move by Royal Bank marks a direct attempt to

challenge Forward Trust, the leasing arm of HSBC Holdings, which bought another train leasing company, Eversholt, early this year. Angel owns about 3,000 of the 11,000 trains belonging to the three leasing companies set up before privatisation.

The Royal Bank is anxious to expand its leasing activities, having previously jointly financed rolling stock for London Underground's Northern Line in 1995, and has investments in other rolling stock projects. The purchase marks the latest in a round of acquisitions of the three rolling stock companies which were privatised last year. As well as Eversholt's purchase by Forward Trust, for £20 million, the third leasing company, Forestbrook, was bought in September last year by Stagecoach, coach and train operator, for £825 million. The purchase was almost £300 million more than the company's management paid seven months earlier when the

Commentary, page 27

**Dispute threatens to split Andersen**

By ROBERT BRUCE

ANDERSEN WORLDWIDE, the world's biggest professional services organisation, looks certain to split apart by a bitter dispute between its accountancy and consulting businesses.

In a flurry of bitter recriminations, Andersen Consulting has taken the first steps towards separating from Arthur Andersen, the accountants.

Andersen Consulting is furious at the amount of revenue it hands over to Arthur Andersen. More than \$100 million (£60 million) was passed across last year under a partnership agreement dominated by Arthur Andersen, which controls the board of Andersen Worldwide. Vernon Ellis, Andersen Consulting's managing director, Europe, Middle East, Africa and India, said: "Arthur Andersen have

behaved as though they have a mystical right to the money."

Arthur Andersen has cited "serious breaches of contract and irreconcilable differences" with Arthur Andersen.

The PCA wants an arbitrator to resolve the dispute.

The move comes after a year of increasing internal strife at the firm, which have sought to stick together under Andersen Worldwide. The friction has been fuelled by the phenomenal growth of Andersen Consulting, a separate business unit since 1989. Arthur Andersen itself has moved aggressively into the consulting business, triggering the current bust-up.

This week almost 1,000 Andersen Consulting partners voted for arbitration.

Accountancy, page 27

**Falling sales raise fears for retailers**

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

HIGH STREET sales growth slowed sharply in November, raising fears that the Christmas shopping season may prove a disappointment for retailers.

Retail sales fell 0.4 per cent in November, cutting the annual rate of growth to 4.8 per cent from 6.4 per cent in October.

The largest fall took place in the clothing and footwear sector, with sales down 2.9 per cent, which analysts blamed on recent mild weather.

However, in a clear signal that windfall spending has declined dramatically, household goods sales fell 3.7 per cent in the quarter — the largest fall in more than ten years.

The Office for National Statistics said the quarterly rate fell to 0.2 per cent, the lowest figure for two years.

Commentary, page 27

## GRE pays £560m for PPP Healthcare Group

By MARIANNE CURPHIEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

GUARDIAN Royal Exchange, the insurance company, is buying PPP Healthcare Group, the second largest private medical insurer. GRE is paying £435 million in cash, with the vendors also receiving a £125 million dividend from PPP, making a total of £560 million.

PPP has a 30 per cent share of the health insurance market and is owned by a charity. The payment, which includes goodwill of £14 million, will go straight to the charity — the PPP Healthcare Medical Trust. GRE beat off competition from GE Capital and Halifax to complete the deal.

Although GRE said the deal gave it "a very significant platform in the UK private medical insurance market", it acknowledged that sales over the past few years had been

flat. Derek Rome, director of corporate affairs, said: "Growth was indeed tame in the 1980s and the removal of tax relief in the last Budget caused some people to lapse. However, according to our estimate, the total market will grow from premium income of £1.7 billion to £2.1 billion by 2000."

John Robins, GRE chief executive, said: "We are determined that the group will be a leader in the sector in the UK and selected overseas markets."

GRE said that overall UK trading conditions were tough, particularly in the area of large property losses, including a single loss of 15 million on a fire claim in October. These factors will be reflected in trading results for the year ending December 31.

Commentary, page 27

## NPC plans demerger as flotation postponed

By PAUL DURMAN

NATIONAL Parking Corporation, the owner of National Car Parks, has postponed its stock market flotation yet again, and is to demerge Green Flag, its vehicle-breakdown business.

NPC, which is 73 per cent owned by its founders, Ronald Hobson and Sir Donald Gosling, was planning to float next year — 23 years on from its first attempt to come to the stock market. But it has now decided that a demerger of Green Flag is the first priority for maximising shareholder value.

Bob Mackenzie, chief executive, said: "NPC intends to demerge Green Flag in the first half of next year. Its shares will initially trade on the OTC market, where NPC is traded,

but the intention is to eventually proceed to a full market listing."

NPC believes Green Flag, sponsor of the England football team, has good potential to grow beyond its existing turnover of £140 million a year, particularly by moving into plumbing and other non-motor help services. NPC is more mature, although Mr Mackenzie sees opportunities in expanding overseas and in UK local authorities seeking to limit street parking.

Mr Mackenzie said the demerger plans were not intended to realise money for Mr Hobson and Sir Donald. He pointed out that NPC has in the past two years paid two special dividends totalling £225 million, of which about £162 million went to the now

elderly founders. This year's interim dividend rises 20 per cent to 3p a share.

NPC, whose confusing name will eventually disappear, has shelved plans to float NCP. Mr Mackenzie said the US parking market undergoing considerable change and parts of Europe are also starting to look encouraging.

NPC reported a 25.5 per cent in its interim pre-tax profits to £26 million on turnover 4.2 per cent higher at £83.9 million. Part of the 7.3 per cent improvement in operating profits to £29.9 million was because of a change in depreciation policy.

Promotional spending on Green Flag left its profits flat.

Commentary, page 27

**Cookson chairman goes with £2.9m payoff**

By PAUL DURMAN

RICHARD OSTER, the highly paid American who has run Cookson Group for the past six years, is to be paid £2.9 million in compensation after boardroom disagreements cost him his job — less than three months since he moved up from chief executive to chairman.

Cookson, which makes specialty chemicals and other materials used in industry, said friction arose when Stephen Howard, who took over as chief executive in October, drew up plans for disposals and for scaling down the company's US office in Rhode Island.

Bob Malpas, who has returned as an interim chair-

The targets we set are very demanding, while many companies routinely pay out 30 per cent to 40 per cent as bonuses, which are as easy to collect as putting your tie on in the morning.

Richard Oster, in April 1995, defending his £1.25 million pay package

**BUSINESS TODAY**

### STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5169.8	(-12.6)
Yield	3.12%	
FTSE All share	2427.06	(-4.46)
Nikkei	16541.06	(+55.25)
New York	7607.69	(+11.19)*
S&P Composite	570.32	(+2.25)*

### US RATES

Federal Funds	5.15%	(5.5%)
Long Bond	102.2*	(102.2)

### UK MONEY

3-month investment	7.7%	(7.7%)
Long-term gilt	121.7*	(121.7)

### STERLING

New York	1.6810*	(1.6855)
London	1.6460	(1.6584)
DM	2.2910*	(2.3145)
FT	0.7947	(0.7972)
BP	2.3525	(2.3572)
Yen	200.23	(213.71)
E Index	103.1	(103.0)

### US DOLLAR

London	1.7710*	(1.7916)
DM	1.6010*	(1.6176)
FT	1.4347*	(1.4405)
BP	1.2451*	(1.2477)
Yen	127.18*	(130.77)
E Index	107.8	(108.0)

Tokyo close Yen 127.03

### SOFT/LONG OIL

Brant 15-day (Mar)	817.60	(817.45)
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### FOREX

London close	9287.05	(9286.26)
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\* denotes midday trading price

## Jobless fall

Unemployment fell by a further 21,000 during November to 1,442,100, the lowest for 17 years. The jobless total peaked five years ago at 1,539 million. The overall seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 5.1 per cent, again the lowest since 1980. Page 26

## Thamesport

Rutland Trust, the mini-conglomerate, yesterday sold Thamesport, the deep-water container terminal on the Isle of Grain, Kent, for £112 million to Hutchison, the Hong Kong ports giant. Page 30, Tempus 28



Richard Oster was credited with turning Cookson round but profits collapsed last year

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## Fischer reveals aims for Springer empire

By RAYMOND SNODDY  
MEDIA EDITOR

**GUS FISCHER**, the new chairman and chief executive of Axel Springer, Europe's largest publishing group, is planning radical change at the company to increase efficiency, invest more in group titles and make it a more international company.

Mr Fischer, an executive of German-Swiss origin based in the UK and who is former chief executive of News International, publisher of *The Times*, will take over at the German group on January 1.

"I didn't want to get involved but they didn't let up and in the end I caved in," says 58-year-old Mr Fischer, who left News International two years ago.

Before his resignation, he was also chief operating officer of News Corporation, the parent company of News International.

Mr Fischer explained yesterday that he had three main goals for the German publishing group, which has a cash pile of around DM300 million (£27.5 million).

"I am going to have to look at the (publishing) process. There are more than 12,000 employees in Germany alone," said Mr Fischer, who was well known at News International for his intention to the detail of costs.

In particular, German print unions are still much more powerful than their UK equivalents and are now likely to have to face a process of modernisation.

Axel Springer's interests range from *Bild Zeitung* and *Die Welt* to *Der Spiegel* magazine, apart from many regional newspapers.

Mr Fischer said he plans to invest some of the savings from greater efficiencies in the products which he believes have become rather conservative in design and appearance.

"We will have to look very carefully at all the products," said Mr Fischer, whose career has included running newspaper equipment companies in the US.

The third challenge, he said, is to make Axel Springer, whose media interests are largely confined to the German-speaking world, more international.

Media investments in the UK were even a possibility.

"It is a market I know well," said Mr Fischer, who plans to keep his house in London, although much of his working life in future will be spent commuting between Hamburg and Berlin, the two centres of the Axel Springer empire.

Berlin, in particular, he believes, is going to be the capital of Middle Europe.

The new chairman and chief executive of Axel Springer would also like to try to ensure that *Die Welt* is "the number one German language paper in the world".

# Ministers urge pay restraint as unemployment hits 17-year low

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

**THE** Government yesterday said wage moderation was "essential" for the health of the economy as unemployment fell by a further 21,000 and earnings growth remained stable.

The clear call by ministers underlines concern in Whitehall that failing unemployment threatens an upsurge in inflation. However, ministers also insisted that the latest decline in unemployment was beneficial for jobseekers and for the economy generally.

The increased pressure for wage moderation came as the number of people out of work and claiming benefit fell in November to 1,412,100. The drop takes the seasonally adjusted claimant count to its lowest level for 17 years, and takes the overall fall in unemployment since its peak five years ago to 1,539 million.

Claimant unemployment fell in all regions, and for both men and women. Unadjusted unemployment—the actual number of people out of work and claiming benefit—was down 45,184 to 1,537,649. The overall

seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell marginally to 5.1 per cent—again the lowest since 1980.

Whitehall suggested that the figures were consistent with a downward trend in unemployment towards the middle of the Office for National Statistics estimate of a fall of 15,000 to 35,000 a month. The latest monthly fall came as

average earnings growth remained stable, with underlying earnings rising 4.25 per cent in the year to October, and the same level as September, and indeed for the past six months, though manufacturing industry earnings ticked up a quarter of a point after revisions to last month's figures.

The figures prompted ministers to renew calls for re-

sponsibility over wages. While welcoming the fall in unemployment as "good news for those moving into jobs and for the economy", Andrew Smith, the Employment Minister, said: "Moderation in earnings growth is essential if economic growth is to continue delivering extra jobs and not just higher earnings for those already in work." He said: "The

prize of sustainable growth and lower unemployment depends on keeping inflationary pressures firmly under control." But ministerial calls were somewhat undercut by an analysis of labour market statistics by Whitehall economists, who said: "There is no sign of a take-off in pay settlements and retail and producer price inflation are low, though core inflation is marginally above the Government's target."

Ministers said that still-high unemployment among men and especially among young people showed the importance of the Welfare to Work programme, with David Blunkett, Education and Employment Secretary, yesterday announcing further 14 employers signing up to the New Deal.

Employment rose 73,000 in the quarter to September by 26,500,000, separate new figures showed yesterday. But further new data showed redundancies continuing, with 187,000 people made redundant in the three months to August.

## Kunick adds to the Midas touch

**KUNICK**, the leisure management group, yesterday reported a 17 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the year to September 30, from £9.1 million to £10.6 million, on turnover of £131 million, up 10 per cent from £119 million. Earnings per share were 2p, up 33p from 1.5p, and a total dividend of 0.85p, up from 0.7p, will be paid on March 3.

The company said that it continued to invest in Midas, its remote electronic machine management system, and in improvements to local authority leisure facilities. It added that growth was expected to be maintained in the year ahead and that prospects were encouraging.

## Richards reduces loss

**RICHARDS**, the textiles group, suffered a £1.57 million loss in the year to September, against a £2.37 million loss in the previous year. A total dividend of 2.0p, unchanged, is to be paid despite losses of 7.22p a share, against 10.63p in the previous year. Brian Gilbert, the septuagenarian chairman, is to stand down at the annual meeting. Ray Dinsdale, the 59-year-old chief executive, also intends to stand down "as soon as possible". Richards said the changes had been planned for some time. The shares remained unchanged at 33.1p.

## Lands Improvement falls

**SHARES** in Lands Improvement fell 18p to 90.5p after the property group said its full-year profits would be substantially below market forecasts. A sharp deterioration in returns from the farming operation was blamed, along with a provision to write down the company's leisure park to its estimated net realisable value. Directors now expect not less than £500,000 before tax for 1997 and expect to pay an unchanged total dividend of 4.75p. Farming losses of at least £1 million are expected after reorganisation costs of £600,000.

## Engineers unprepared

**EEF**, the organisation that represents employers in the engineering industries, said yesterday the vast majority of engineering firms were wholly unprepared for economic and monetary union. An EEF survey suggests that only one in ten firms have made definite plans for EMU. EEF leaders accepted that preparing for EMU was so far "not an immediate concern", but insisted this was primarily because of a lack of clarity on the issue from the Government and an unclear target date for the UK's participation.

## Delphi postponement

**DELPHI** GROUP, the computer software and services company, has been advised to postpone its American placing on the Nasdaq market until the first quarter of 1998. Rapid deterioration in market conditions for new issues in America is blamed. Shares in Delphi fell 24p to 69p. Tony Reeves, chairman and chief executive, said: "We have decided to postpone the issue until conditions are more favourable. Our commitment to the pursuit of the company's US growth strategy remains firm and we will push ahead with it by all means available to us."

## Byatt plans to get tough

**IAN BYATT**, the water regulator, yesterday said that he will get tough on water companies that were slow to cut operating costs. Mr Byatt delivered his warning, linked to the next price review, after figures from Ofwat showed that operating costs across the industry had fallen 6 per cent over the past four years. He said: "Companies that are relatively less efficient can expect commensurately tougher targets on operating costs." The next pricing review for water will start in 2000, but Mr Byatt has started drafting plans for the review.

## Barclays strike called off

**A PLANNED** strike by Barclays Bank workers on Christmas Eve has been called off after an agreement to hold fresh talks on a long-running pay dispute. Members of Bifu and Unifor, the unions, had been due to walk out next week in the latest in a series of 24-hour stoppages in protest at a performance-related pay scheme. But the strike was called off yesterday after an offer from the bank to hold talks. Barclays said that, after "constructive discussions" with the unions, a way forward had now been agreed.

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## LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

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### LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE  
QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION  
COMPANIES COURT  
IN THE MATTER OF THE  
COMPANY OF THE  
CROWN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Petition was on 27th November 1997 filed in the High Court of Justice for the confirmation of the reduction of the share capital of the Company of the Crown from £25,250,000 to £24,950,000 (AN ORDER FOR REDUCTION OF SHARE CAPITAL).

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the said Petition is given notice of hearing before the Queen's Bench Division on Wednesday 14th January 1998.

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**W**hen on the opposition benches, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, was a virulent opponent of rail privatisation. How right he was? In hindsight, the last administration succeeded in delivering a main plank of the transport infrastructure into private hands for a knockdown price. How knockdown: is only becoming more and more apparent. Angel Trains — the third and the apparently most keenly priced of the rolling stock leasing companies (Roscos) — yesterday passed from the hands of Nomura, its original buyer, to Royal Bank of Scotland, delivering a £389 million profit in the process. That represents a compound return of 25 per cent a year. And, if you take account of the financial engineering that Nomura was able to bring to bear to the deal, the pure profit can be seen as 65,000 per cent of the risk capital. A nice deal by anyone's calculations.

Of course Angel is not the only, nor the most blatant, winner from rail privatisation. There was Eversholt and Porterbrook, the other two Roscos — Prism, Rail, Stagecoach, Virgin Trains, ScotRail and the biggest money spinner of the lot, Railtrack. Even allowing for the recent fall in the share price due to the intervention of the rail regulator, John Swift, it has delivered a 50 per cent return to investors in little more than 18 months of trading on the stock market.

There are many reasons for why the rail network was sold so cheaply. And Prescott has to take his share of the blame. In opposition, he always threatened to unravel privatisation once Labour was elected, so delivering what is called in the market "regulatory risk". This promise has not been fulfilled, prompting, among other things, the massive outperformance of Railtrack since May 1. But the threat pushed down prices and frightened away investors. The other person who should be blamed is John Major. He managed to hang on to power for a crucial few months longer than anyone in the industry expected, so allowing the privatisation process to get closer to completion than many involved in the process had feared might be the case.

But what is the regulatory risk these days? Given Gordon Brown's tough spending constraint, Labour is severely restricted in what it might be able to do about renationalisation. It can only use the rail regulator to reconstruct the potential returns privatised groups make. This he is doing. The regulatory review Swift published last week indicated that the new regime will be much more strict when determining what rate of return

the rail companies are allowed to take. Rail fares will be kept in check. Subsidies will be cut. The good times may well be over.

So is this a good time for Royal Bank to buy into rail leasing? It beat off a bid from GE Capital, the world expert in this area, which was unhappy that it missed out on a Rosco the first time around. This indicates that Royal Bank has paled over the top for a business with declining prospects.

Now, despite Cookson's dismal share price performance over the last two years, this is not strictly a reward for failure. Cookson looked in danger of going under before Oster took over back in 1991. But he has already been amply rewarded, being paid £1 million or more in each of the last four years.

What should really stick in investors' craws is that Oster only signed a new three-year contract last March — only a few months before he moved from chief executive to chairman. Not one of life's natural non-executives, Oster found the transition difficult, particularly when the

new chief executive made moves to offload some of Oster's pet businesses and scale down the US head office, which just happens to be in Rhode Island. Cookson portrays this as a friendly disagreement but it was sufficiently concerned to call back the only recently departed Bob Malpas, 70, as an interim chairman.

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More fundamentally, the causes of Oster's departure raise questions about the degree of influence he was allowed to exercise and the balance of powers within the Cookson board. Stephen Howard, the new

putting off flotation plans. For the record, a market listing was first mooted for NPC way back in 1975.

The latest plan is to demerge Green Flag, the motor rescue rival to AA and RAC, and trade its shares on the unregulated Oflex market. This will release £200 million to NPC without having to reveal the full details of the group's accounts and how much money it makes from its contracts with local councils.

The only way to get these out into the open is for a full investigation into NPC's business practices, which once famously involved spying on a rival operator, a company it later bought out. Given NPC will make more than £50 million this year, enjoying margins of up to 15 per cent, the MMC is certain to have an interesting time working out whether the group operates in the public interest.

#### Flood of excuses

ANOTHER Christmas season brings yet another set of excuses from retailers. It seems that shoppers were not buying shoes and clothes in November because it was too warm. This follows the effect of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, which blighted the high street September and October. Now it is too cold for the Christmas boom. So please, please, please can someone tell me, what is the ideal weather for shopping?

# This Angel isn't heavenly

## COMMENTARY by our City Editor

## Lonrho ends hotel talks with prince

By JASON NIEST

**L**ONRHO has broken off negotiations with Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, the Saudi investor, about the \$500 million (£303 million) sale of the Princess Hotels chain.

The mining-based conglomerate, which expects to sell the business in the new year, has sent sales memorandums to at least two other parties.

The favourite buyer is believed to be Starwood Lodging, the US group that recently bought ITT Sternan. Other bidders are expected to include Hilton Hotels Corporation, the US partner of Ladbrooke Group, and Host Marriott.

Lonrho is confident that it will receive at least the amount Prince Alwaleed was offering.

The breakdown in talks with Prince Alwaleed, whose investments include stakes in Canary Wharf and Euro Disney, comes more than six months after Lonrho signed an exclusivity deal with Prince Alwaleed, who is believed to have spent more than £5 million in fees on the aborted deal.

When Lonrho entered into the talks it desperately needed money to pay its debts. Since

### Zeneca to acquire fungicide business

By PAUL DUNMAN

**S**ANDARD LIFE, Europe's largest mutual life assurance company, yesterday announced it was making on the banks with the launch of a savings account. It is the latest in a long line of newcomers to challenge the traditional high street banks, including Sainsbury's, Tesco and Virgin.

The new telephone-based account will offer a rate of 6.76 per cent on balances of as little as £1. The supermarket pay 6.5 per cent, one of the highest rates in the market for small savings.

Jim Spowart, managing director of Standard Life Bank, said that the account would remain competitive because, as a direct service, it would not have to maintain a branch network.

The Standard Life direct access savings account, which will be launched on January 5, will initially be aimed at individuals, but there are plans to extend it to business.

The group also plans to launch fixed-term savings accounts and will bring in mortgages, followed by personal loans next summer.

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WORLDCOVER

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STOCK MARKET



TRASER NEWS

# Bank rally peters out as chill winds hit retailers

LONDON'S blue chips paused for breath yesterday on a sudden dearth of hype in the financial sector. Unrest among the retailers saw the FTSE 100 retreat slightly, but remain within striking distance of its 5,330.8 high.

The index ended 12.6 points, to 5,190.8 yesterday, as early gains in Wall Street soon vanished, leaving the City to reconsider takeover speculation that had lifted retail banks to record highs.

Abbey National saw an abrupt end to its week-long bull run by dropping 41p to close at 111.03. With it fell Barlays, down 50p to 117. Abbey National down 44p to 111.03, and Alliance & Leicesters, down 16p to 115.9.

A profits warning from Oasis Stores, down 56p at 130, allowed Société Générale — its house broker — to turn negative on the whole sector. With official data showing a retail volume slump in November, the City needed no further excuse to knock down almost every quoted retailer.

Marks & Spencer was worst hit, dropping 20p back to 600p. The food retailers came in right behind it, with Tesco losing 10p to 488p, Safeway a further 8p to 329p and J Sainsbury 10p to 509p. Asda, which announces its half-year results today, softened 31p to 170.1p.

Bass was the best performer of the day, gaining 37p to a high of 936p. Goldman Sachs said it has still further to go, with a value of 111.50.

Nevertheless, Diageo was given a cold reception as the merged Guinness and Grand Metropolitan finished its first day 11p cheaper at 590p. Scottish & Newcastle gained 20p to close at 758p, while Whitbread advanced 23p to 897p.

Inn Business, a brewing minnow, moved up 2p to 59.5p on suggestions that it is looking vulnerable at a low of 57.1p, while the rest of the UK brewing sector rallied.

The result was a 1.26 point drop in the FTSE 100, which closed at 5,190.8 points after 870 million shares changed hands. The drop came in spite of predictions by Merrill Lynch that the index will achieve a minimum of 5,400 next year as lots more money from European equity houses chase far fewer shares.

It forecast that Railtrack's phenomenal run has further to go. The company's shares



Bass, up 37p, was best performer while Diageo lost 11p

immediately jumped 17p to 967p. It also named Lloyds TSB, up 15p at 899, as one of 1998's most promising stocks, along with Ladbrokes, off 31p at 211p, and British Aerospace, off 19p at 117.12. It also reckons Imperial Tobacco is "incredibly cheap" — the shares edged ahead 31p to 364p.

Its most successful tip has been Logica, the computer services company recovering from a summer slump. The shares broke the 111 level after 401p.

UBS's wish list, released last week, has had a mixed

reception so far. The broker fancies Mayflower, 1p easier at 179p, UniChem, off 5p at 319p, N Brown, steady at 421p, Great Portland Estates, off 11p at 253p, and Gallaher, 9p stronger at 364p.

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The shares, currently at an 11-month low, are expected to pick up when the penny drops.

BOC Technology, which provides a halfway house for microchip production, was awarded at 10p premium on its AIM debut and closed at 15p.

**□ GILT-EDGE:** The prospect of another interest rate rise seemed even more distant in the future pit, after sluggish retail sales figures sparked a small retreat in both longs and shorts.

Treasury 7 per cent 2002 came off four notches to £101<sup>12</sup>, while Treasury 8 per cent 2021 eased 1<sup>12</sup> to £103<sup>12</sup>.

**□ NEW YORK:** Blue chips quickly shed most of their early gains after 3M shares tumbled when the company said fourth-quarter profits would be dented by currency and Asian factors. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 11.19 points ahead at 7,967.50.

With only seven shopping days to Christmas, the City is becoming increasingly worried about UK clothing retailers.

A walk down any high street shows that the big chains have already started their "new year" sales, sacrificing profit margins to make sure of clearing the shelves.

To investors, this suggests an element of desperation and the fact that shops have geared up for a Christmas boom that is not materialising.

Also, retailers are no longer a rare safe haven for a rather unhappy new year.

With the recovery among banks complete, the City is more adventurous and ready to quit retailers before more stores follow Oasis's profits warning.

With no more artificial market forces protecting the shares, and the prospect of a scrooge-like Christmas ahead, only retailers with the strongest brand names can be sure of avoiding a rather unhappy new year.

**□ RUBBER FUTURES (GNI Ldt)**

**□ DAS OIL**

**□ LIFFE BIFEX (GNI Ldt \$/bbl)**

Some incidents stick in the mind. You remember, for instance, if a Japanese business intellectual leans confidentially across the table of an expensive Tokyo bar and says: "You must become the new Keynes". Fifteen years ago, the certainty of failing in such a doomed mission did not seem too ignominious. The Japanese economy adapted quickly to the 1979 oil shock and was recovering healthily at the time.

Back home, unemployment was on the way to its postwar peak, but the economy had turned back up solidly and inflation was falling. Although a more caring approach to manufacturing would have been welcome, there was no chance of the experimental long, blunt shock to the economy being abandoned.

Fifteen years later, Japan could do with a new Keynes. Instead, it has Ryutaro Hashimoto, a pragmatic prime minister trying to do his best. To his credit, Mr Hashimoto shocked his own officials yesterday when he announced that he would propose an emergency package of tax cuts in

January, undermining their "responsible" but disastrous three-year programme of fiscal tightening. The figures look huge but are equivalent to tax cuts of about £2 billion in UK terms, useful rather than sensational.

With luck, Mr Hashimoto will undo the damage of the earlier Budget, which nipped fragile recovery in the bud. That would still leave Japan's economy floundering, eight years to the month after the start of a rolling collapse of asset prices and confidence.

As Mr Hashimoto acknowledges, stagnation in the world's second biggest economy is now inflicting heavy damage on much of the rest of East Asia, just as America's slump after the 1990s crash spread havoc in Europe and Japan. The legacy of experience and the old Keynes ensure that Japan's misfortunes are not on the 1930s scale. The focus has been on

the financial sector, leaving unemployment at about 3½ per cent. But the plight of Japanese finance has left trebly exposed those tiger economies that depended on Japanese consumer markets, investment and lending.

Officials in Tokyo have been damned for allowing banks to put off the pain of coming to terms with mountains of bad debts. But a bombed financial system can only count the cost when it has recovered enough to pay it. Tough action then boosts confidence. Recent collapses of Yamaichi et al still have a look of weakness. Mr Hashimoto has also just proposed another bold issue to shore up faith in bank deposits.

The developing world needs a dynamic, buoyant Japan but it is easier to explain what went wrong than to put it right. Only the Second World War lifted America out of the doldrums. Fortunately,



Graham Dear Jeanty

there is no such prospect for Japan. Unfortunately, Tokyo may point the way for the rest of us.

America and economists of the new global orthodoxy bear some blame. They hollied Japan to internationalise the yen and deregulate financial services. But Japan kept old practices such as cartels to shore up values, helping to blow up a financial bubble and then

burst it. The bilateral trade surplus with America became such a political sore that the US became determined to hobble Japan's too-competitive manufacturers. It made sense to push the yen up and break down import barriers. But external pressure to restructure Japan's successful economy then gained such momentum that OECD economists perennially complain, for instance, that not enough small shops have yet been put out of business.

Japan's economic success was built on the ability to combine social stability with rapid change. No wonder it is not responding to well to attempts to convert it to the IMF/OECD model. Last week, OECD economists' annual report on Japan again pressed for even more of the same: a faster "big bang" deregulation of financial services to cut costs to world levels, a freer market in more transient

pushed back so far that the dying population is aging and orthodoxy dictates that public pensions and healthcare be cut.

The fall from grace may not be so bad in the rest of the developed world. Today's global economic orthodoxy, having fought the anti-inflation war, would not, however, help to win the next one, the one Japan is embroiled in. When monetary expansion fails, as in Japan, the new euro system has no fiscal alternative. If there is a downturn in the next few years, London's new independent interest rate setters will not acquire the subtlety of Alan Greenspan's US Federal Reserve in time.

There is no new Keynes, nor is there likely to be. Perhaps the macroeconomic policy revolution has played all its cards. Perhaps the internal dynamics of the 1990s American economy can eventually be translated elsewhere. Meanwhile, Japan should spurn orthodoxy, print lots of money and reward its families generously for their second and third children.

## Japan pioneers the new stagnation

Martin Waller wonders whether the bear market is coming — or has the downturn already arrived?

It is December 1999 and the Millennium Dome is still not finished. Any jubilation within the Labour Party over the political demise of Peter Mandelson, however, is tempered by the realisation that the next election will not be anywhere near as easy to win as the last. The economy is in neutral. While no one is yet talking recession, the free-spending days of the early Blair administration seem a long way away.

In Asia, Japan is 18 months into an austerity programme imposed, humiliatingly, by the International Monetary Fund. 1998, the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese calendar, failed to live up to its billing: numerous Asian banks and conglomerates went bust. The surviving manufacturers are pumping out consumer goods at prices that Western producers cannot hope to match, given the sharp decline in Asian currencies. That currency gap and the new fashion for austerity mean no one there is buying Western luxury goods any more.

On the stock market, the FTSE 100 index is edging up towards 4,400 again. It closed 1997, the last year of the bull market, at about 5,200. By July 1998, it had fallen to 4,600, as the implications of the Asian crisis finally sank in. By the end of the year it was below 4,500; since then the market has moved sideways. A pattern has been set: weeks of progress are subsequently wiped out by a sudden 100-point fall on any piece of bad news.

Welcome to the bear market. This is not a scenario being mapped out by many equity strategists as we move towards the end of 1997. Most are shooting for a further upward march in the market.

But it is not an impossible scenario, either. And few in the City remember the last protracted bear market, when share prices marked time or gradually subsided over a period of years. There have been plenty of blips in living memory. David Schwartz is a stock market historian. He says the best definition of a bear market is a 15 per cent fall in share prices. There have

been 20 such in the UK since the First World War. Four were drops of 50 per cent or more, but these have attended special circumstances — war, depression, or the fringe bank failures, rampant trade unionism and soaring inflation in the early 1970s.

The other 16 separate nearly into two equal-sized groups, small drops of 15 to 25 per cent and larger ones ranging up to 40 per cent. Half of all these began within 30 months of a previous downturn, and proved to be fairly minor. The other half began more than 30 months after the preceding bear market had begun, and all but one, which was deflected by an election, were serious downturns.

It is dangerous to extrapolate directly from such patterns, but Mr Schwartz points out that almost four years have passed since the start of the last downturn, in February 1994. "History hints that the next downturn will probably be a medium-sized one."

Against that, bear markets can be deflected by chance events like that election. "In many different ways, the 1992 bear market was shaping up to be a monumental one," says Mr Schwartz. "You had a recession, and the pound was too high." Then came Britain's sudden exit from the European exchange-rate mechanism — the chance deflection in this case came from George Soros. "Every investor every morning should get out of his prayer mat and thank Soros," he adds.

But let us assume that the above scenario maps out. The FTSE 100 index peaked at 5,330.8 on October 1. If by the end of next year it is down to 4,500, then the fall will have been 15.6 per cent in little more than a year, which fits our definition of bear market. If the market then drifts sideways for another year, who loses and who benefits?

City professionals, surprisingly, seem inclined to view the prospects with some enthusiasm, at least for the opportunities available over the first few months, because the current high level of the market means prices of businesses in

which they trade are seen as uncomfortably high. Lower prices mean more deals, particularly if cash-rich big corporates feel free to take our smaller, less financially stable competitors.

David Beever, chairman of KPMG Corporate Finance, says: "There are lots of corporates praying for a bear market because they very much want to make acquisitions but they can't pay these prices because it would mean earnings dilution, and they dare not do it with debt."

"There are situations where the market could freeze entirely, such as happened in 1973. But I don't think that is going to happen now — the fundamentals are much stronger."

Gordon Bonnyman, managing director of Charterhouse Development Capital, thinks the current values put on companies can be dangerous. "We've got very high prices; we have in relative terms, very low interest rates. We've got long-term debt available in the bond markets where repayments don't start for ten, 11 or 12 years. Perhaps the

partners, says: "I'm a bear as well — I find it very difficult to see why prices should go up unless people haven't anything better to do with their money. I think it's opportunity time. We had great times in previous bear markets, such as the very early 1990s, buying businesses at very reasonable prices. We were a good source of money at that time."

"There are situations where the market could freeze entirely, such as happened in 1973. But I don't think that is going to happen now — the fundamentals are much stronger."

The effect of a bear market, especially if accompanied by higher interest rates, would mean companies would be more constrained from raising fresh capital on the stock market through rights issues, and would find banking finance more expensive. But it would not preclude them from doing deals entirely.

Mr Beever does not expect the market to set like cement if share prices fall. "I think the big mergers will continue to be driven by synergistic benefits, and people have got to do their arithmetic very carefully to see if those synergies are there."

The corporates with strong balance sheets that need acquisitions to continue their

worst ingredient in this lethal cocktail is that we've got a bunch of venture capitalists who believe they can do no wrong. It's a very difficult market to buy in for those reasons. If the market were to fall off to a very fair degree and then stay flat off, that would help us tremendously."

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balance sheets that need acquisitions to continue their

growth will be tempted to bid. If the market is a bit depressed then they might get away with a lower premium than 40 per cent or so which now seems to be required.

"For companies that might have their competitors in their sights, a 10 per cent fall in the market would obviously be helpful. For small to medium-sized companies, if they find 1998 tough for whatever reason, exchange rates perhaps or more likely a slowdown in the economy, then they might find themselves in a hunting season, and would find banking finance more expensive. But it would not preclude them from doing deals entirely."

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The corporates with strong

## Who's afraid of the end of the bull run?

IT WAS Milton Friedman, the high priest of monetarism, who said there was no such thing as a free lunch. But like many of that economist's theorems, this statement has not stood the test of time, as a reader from Wimbledon has pointed out to me.

Currently the Royal Mint is offering for sale the new £5 coins at face value. They can be ordered — postage and packing free — using a credit card, so giving the purchasers air miles, bonus points or, if you possess an Alliance & Leicester card, a 2 per cent cash rebate.

The reader has bought 200 coins, banked the £1,000 and collected the £20 rebate. This totally legal loophole puts the Tesco clubcard scam — where at one point the rebate on bananas was worth more than the cost of the fruit — in the shade. I can only advise all Alliance & Leicester card holders to pile in immediately.

• I AM indebted to the latest Securities and Future Authority briefing for its collection of "thoughts from the walls". These are little notes that the City regulator's inspectors have noticed pinned up in the offices of firms that they visit. My favourites will be no doubt familiar to anyone who has ever encountered the boss from hell — "I didn't work for him for long but I still wake up screaming".

### Card sharp

THE departure of Richard Oster as chairman of Cookson reminds me of a time when I went to visit the garrulous man at the chemical group's City offices. I was leaning on the reception desk when I noticed a few cards stuck next to a secretary's phone. Among the usual tax numbers was a card promising "executive services" from a busy 19-year-

old. I wonder what those services were?

IT IS good to see that the traditional merchant banks still cling to old traditions. Staff at N.M. Rothschild celebrate what the company calls "the festive season" with a complimentary turkey. There is of course a pecking order which dictates that junior staff take home a lighter bird. Everyone can opt for a small, medium or large turkey, but a small thank you to a big dog outweighs a minion's big bird as befits an organisation that remains conscious of social-class rank and status. All well and good, except that some senior staff have asked for a small turkey, but are having to cart home 22lb plus of poultry.

IAN HISLOP, the follicularly challenged editor of *Private Eye*, fell prey to the TV phenom-

emon of the year this week. At a charity do for Crisis at Christmas, held by the property industry, Hislop beat rivals from Coopers & Lybrand and BAA to pay £1,000 for a full set of the four. That works out at £250 each for Tinky Winky, Dipsy, La-La and Po. But this was cheap. Reuters City Screen yesterday auctioned a Tinky Winky to financial dealers, with a certain Mr Mustard from moneybrokers RP Martin paying £500, which went to the Cancer and Leukaemia Childhood Trust. The Teletubby was actually donated by one Steven Cartwright of a firm called Gordon Brown Associates. It can't be the Gordon Brown can't?

JASON NISSE

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SOMETIMES IT'S EASIER TO TALK TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T LIKE

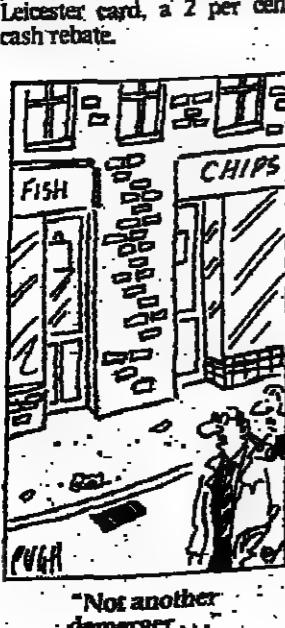


When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone. Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in? An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell us who, and you may end up telling us who.

You may be lucky enough to be able to confide in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonizingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who care about us.

The Samaritans are here to help. And sometimes your relationship is



"Not another demerger..."

# Rutland Trust sells Thamesport for £112m

By GEORGE SIVELL

RUTLAND TRUST, the mini-conglomerate, yesterday sold Thamesport, the deep-water container terminal on the Isle of Grain, Kent, for £112 million to Hutchison, the Hong Kong ports group.

Hutchison is one of the world's largest container shippers and already owns Felixstowe, Britain's busiest container port. Earlier this year Hutchison said it would spend £100 million over five years to improve Felixstowe.

Of the purchase price up to £8 million will go to the management of Maritime Transport Services Holdings (MTSH), the holding company of Thamesport. It is

believed the lion's share of the £8 million will be shared between three top managers although another £3 million will be paid to MTSH, which included Thamesport and its sister company, Maritime Haulage.

The deal remains subject to approval by Rutland shareholders and is conditional on the Office of Fair Trading not referring it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Out of the total of £112 million, debts of £38.9 million in MTSH will be repaid to a banking syndicate.

Rutland will receive net cash of approximately £78.7 million, including £3.3 million for repayment of a subordinated loan made to MTSH by Rutland together with accrued interest. Rutland said it will use the cash to take advantage of other opportunities as they arise.

Michael Langdon, Rutland chief executive and deputy chairman, said: "In our view, the Hutchison offer represents a suitable way forward for Thamesport and in two years realises more than double the value of Rutland's original investment. It will leave us with significant cash resources."

He added: "Thamesport is a classic Rutland turnaround. From being in the hands of its bankers in late 1995 it is now a successful and growing container terminal." Thamesport is being upgraded to handle 425,000 containers a year in a quay and container park extension due for completion during the summer of 1998.

Rutland shares rose 7p to 51½p yesterday. It said that overall trading was satisfactory. After the deal it will have net cash of £71.5 million and net assets of around £121 million.

Carpetright, the privately owned ferries group, has acquired Scrutons, the shipping and ports company, for £15 million in an effort to expand its service in the Irish Sea.

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Lord Harris, right, with John Kitching, managing director, says Carpetright will open 40 stores a year until 2000

## Carpetright plans £25m expansion

By CHRIS AYRES

THE market share of Carpetright is expected to nearly double to 30 per cent by 2000, Lord Harris of Peckham, the carpet tycoon and Conservative peer behind the company, said yesterday.

He made the bold statement after revealing that under a £25 million expansion Carpetright, which currently has 303 outlets, would open 40 new stores each year until the millennium.

Lord Harris, chairman and chief executive, inherited his family's carpet business 40 years ago and sold it for £450 million in 1988, starting again with Carpetright.

Carpetright yesterday reported a 16 per cent rise in pre-tax profits from £1.4 million to £1.6 million for the six months to October 23, on turnover of £128 million, up 21 per cent from £106 million.

Earnings per share were up 18 per cent to 14.3p (12.1p) and a dividend of 9.5p (7.5p) is due on February 28. The company is expected to meet full-year forecasts.

## Oftel supports package deals

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

DON CRUCKSHANK, Director-General of Oftel, yesterday backed the cable industry's practice of offering consumers low-cost package deals which include a telephone line and a small number of television channels.

Mr Cruckshank told the Independent Television Commission, which is investigating the whole issue of "bundling" of cable channels, that the inexpensive packages were "fair competition and good news for the consumer".

Bundling involves offering a large number of cable channels on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Yesterday Mr Cruckshank said that there should be cause for concern where a supplier with a significant degree of market power made services available only in bundled form.

"BSkyB's practice of supplying premium sports and movie channels to satellite customers only if they also subscribe to its own package of basic programming could

constitute a significant barrier to market entry for other providers of basic channel packages," Mr Cruckshank said. News International, the subsidiary of The News Corporation that owns *The Times*, owns 40 per cent stake of BSkyB.

Mr Cruckshank suggested that perhaps dominant operators should make their premium channels available to other providers on "fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory" terms.

This month the issue of which channels should or should not be included in the basic package has spilled into the High Court. On Tuesday Live TV, the Mirror Group's cable channel, famed for innovations such as News: Bally, won a permanent injunction against NTL, the cable group, to keep the channel in its basic package.

Earlier in the month Channel One reached an agreement with Cable & Wireless Communications on similar issues.

UP TO 1,100 jobs could be at risk at Coats Viyella, the textile firm that yesterday issued a profit warning and split out the details of the demerger of its contract clothing operations and the fashion businesses into a new quoted company, to be called Viyella.

Coats Viyella said trading in the second half had been disappointing with the strength of sterling and the downturn in South-East Asia affecting its clothing and thread businesses.

The company expects operating profit to fall £40 million short of the £174 million achieved last year. Michael Ost, chief executive of Coats said: "The demerger of Viyella will not solve the operational problems of the business."

The demerged Viyella will include the UK and European textile businesses as well as the Jaeger and Viyella retail chains, a group comprising more than £900 million in sales. It will include the Marks & Spencer contract clothing business, but it will shed Counterpart, the division that supplies retailers other than M&S which is expected to lose £8 million this year.

The thread and precision engineering businesses, with sales of £1.5 billion will make up the new Coats group. The company would not comment yesterday on the dividend likely to be paid out by the demerged companies.

Counterpart employs about 1,100 people, with factories in the Midlands and Scotland and sourcing operations in London. The company hopes to sell the Counterpart businesses, but if buyers are not found at a satisfactory price, the operations will be shut at a cost of some £15 million.

Sir David Alliance, chairman of Coats Viyella, said every attempt would be made to find buyers for the assets and he did not expect all the staff to be made redundant.

The demerged Coats Viyella breaks apart the textiles empire built up by Sir David over the past decade. Sir David said yesterday that the company had suffered from having as much as 70 per cent of its garment manufacturing business based in the UK while rivals had reduced their UK exposure to 50 per cent.

The demerged is expected to be completed mid 1998.

## BUSINESS POLICY

### BA denies US court setback with Laker

BRITISH AIRWAYS has denied suffering a reversal in its legal fight with Sir Freddie Laker, the cut-price travel pioneer, over landing slots for Laker Airlines at Gatwick. Laker Airlines, based in Florida, said an American court had overturned a ruling in favour of British Airways, allowing Laker Airlines to proceed with its claim that British Airways had used its dominant position to prevent it obtaining desirable slots at Gatwick. This is understood to be incorrect.

Laker has filed a motion to alter the judgment, effectively inviting the US district court judge to reconsider his motion to dismiss. Our report suggesting otherwise was based on incorrect agency copy. Laker launched its action against British Airways in the US District Court in Fort Lauderdale in June, saying that slots for its London-Miami service are too late to allow passengers to make connecting flights to Central and South America and the Caribbean.

### National Express deal

NATIONAL EXPRESS has bought Group Bronckaers, a privately owned bus operator in Belgium, for £4.25 million in cash. It said £3 million will be paid on completion with a further £1.25 million during the next two years, subject to Group Bronckaers achieving future operating profit targets of £600,000 in each of the two years. Based at Genk near the Dutch and German borders, Bronckaers operates 104 vehicles and has 100 staff. In the year to June 30 it reported a turnover of £4.3 million, and operating profit of £450,000.

### Tunstall in MBO talks

TUNSTALL GROUP, the provider of emergency communications for the elderly, said its executive management was in talks with potential providers of finance to proceed with a management buyout of the company. The buyout proposals were first revealed in September. Independent directors are being advised by Close Brothers. Yesterday Tunstall reported a fall in pre-tax profits to £4.14 million (£8.19 million) in the year to September 30. Earnings were 7.1p (17.7p) a share. The final dividend is held at 3.32p, making a total of 5.17p (5p).

### BAT unit disposal

SOUZA CRUZ, BAT Industries' 75 per cent-owned Brazilian unit, said it has agreed to sell its wholly owned subsidiary, Companhia Industrial de Papel Pirahy, to Schweizer-Mauduit International for \$62 million (£37 million). It said the transaction will not produce any effect which may substantially affect the net worth, the results and the operations of Souza Cruz. Pirahy is the only national producer of cigarette paper. Schweizer-Mauduit has operations in America, France and Canada.

### Saga writes down stake

SAGA PETROLEUM will write down the book value of its 23.5 per cent stake in the Dunward and Dauntless North Sea oilfield by between \$50 million (£30 million) and \$60 million.

The field operator, Amerada Hess, has advised Saga and the other owners that reserves in the field and the rate of production are lower than originally estimated. The book value of the field at August 31 was \$73.8 million. Saga said further evaluations of the field will be necessary before the company can specify the exact amount of the write-down.

### Prestbury acquires lease

PRESTBURY has exchanged contracts to acquire the long leasehold interest in Intec business park, Basingstoke, from Royal Life for £13.25 million. Prestbury said the multi-let property, built in 1985, comprises 223,000 sq ft of principally air-conditioned high-tech space in five buildings on a secured estate of some 13 acres. Around 90,000 sq ft is currently vacant, the company said. The leasehold is held from the local council on a 250-year lease. Prestbury said the acquisition is being funded from cash resources and bank finance will be sought shortly.

### OMG backs research

AN INVESTMENT of £5 million cash is to be made by Oxford Molecular Group (OMG) in Cambridge Drug Discovery, a new service company that will specialise in providing advanced high-throughput screening services for customers, ranging from large pharmaceutical groups to small biotech companies. The automated process allows large numbers of chemical compounds to be rapidly tested for potential therapeutic activity in the discovery of new drugs. OMG will provide a full drug design and screening service.

### Stagecoach Lisbon bid

STAGECOACH HOLDINGS, the UK transport group, has jointly submitted a tender to operate the North-South rail link in Lisbon in partnership with Mota, a Portuguese construction company. The proposal is being considered by the Portuguese privatisation commission. The link is intended to relieve congestion and reduce travelling time for thousands of passengers. The winning bidder is likely to be chosen in the summer of 1998 and to begin operations in the first quarter of 1999.

### Bowthorpe acquisition

BOWTHORPE, the electronics group, is acquiring Western Pacific Data Systems (WPDS), a US software company, for up to \$38.1 million. WPDS supplies an integrated software package called Gold, which manages logistics, maintenance, supply and inventory adopted by several major companies. In the ten months to October 31 WPDS earned pre-tax profits of \$3.2 million. Full-year profits are expected to be \$6 million. Bowthorpe has also agreed to buy WPDS's UK subsidiary, based in Somerset, for £600,000.

## Eurotherm blames cut in profits on strong pound

By MARTIN BARROW

THE strong pound battered Eurotherm, the controls and instrumentation company, where pre-tax profits fell almost 20 per cent to £30.3 million in the year to October 31.

Sir James Hann, chairman, announced year-end figures, said yesterday that the strength of sterling against leading currencies was a serious threat to business.

He said: "The cumulative effect of the continued strength of sterling taken across thousands of exporting companies in Britain could, in my view, do unnecessary damage to the economy, to the UK's growth prospects and to our manufacturing base unless we return

to more acceptable exchange rate levels in the months to come."

Eurotherm's reported earnings fell to 22.7p a share from 27.6p. To illustrate the impact of sterling, the company also restated earnings at constant exchange rates to show that growth would have been above 10 per cent.

Turnover of £202.3 million was down from £206.5 million last year, but would have been £211 million higher at constant exchange rates.

Sir James said the stronger second half reflected actions that were taken to mitigate the exchange rate impact. Markets in Britain and America

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The Right Chemistry

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## ACCOUNTANCY

## Don't just measure the past

**EMPLOYEE SERVICES**  
Neil Chisman explains the reasons why senior management should be held to account for their performance

Accountants have lost sight of their purpose in life. We are supposed to hold management accountable for their performance, which we do very well for middle and junior levels of management, where performance is measured by profit. But we fail with boards of directors because they are not responsible for profit, but the creation of value.

Profit is important since it is a key driver of value, but other senior management activities are equally so — setting and disseminating strategy, managing risk, buying and selling businesses, and much more. Senior management decisions create or destroy much more value than the execution of those decisions at middle and junior levels.

Accountants do not measure this performance, although it is entirely possible. If the balance sheet records net assets at current values — what management believes they should be worth — it represents a snapshot in time of the value created since inception. Gains and losses are only the difference in net asset value at the beginning and end of a period adjusted for any cashflows to or from shareholders. And if the balance sheet is in current values then

those gains and losses represent the value created or destroyed in a period.

Accountants and management complain that current values cannot be ascertained with any accuracy. It is the role of the stock market to value, not accountants. To this, management have no difficulty in valuing businesses when considering mergers and acquisitions. They can forecast cashflows many years into the future under considerable uncertainty, they can identify their weighted average cost of capital, and can perform discounted cashflow analyses.

It is easy to value businesses because they have revenue streams. It is not necessary to measure the values of individual assets, they are only the component parts of businesses. The impairment tests proposed by the ASB in recent FREDs show what is required.

Current value accounting would hold senior management accountable for their overall performance. Management would be required to show, on their own estimates, the value that they have created or destroyed. And the focus of attention of analysts and other observers would be upon the totality of value-creating activity, not just the arguable

Neil Chisman is a supporter of current value accounting

part, which we currently call profit. This would be a major step forward, but not enough.

Analysts and shareholders need to take their own view on the value of a company to provide discipline on management. They need to judge independently the company's prospects, the quality and repeatability of profit and cashflows, and the quality of management. There is a sim-

ple solution. Make a forecast. Add an extra column of figures in the financial schedules showing management's estimates of the outcome for the next financial year. Outrageous? Certainly new, but hardly difficult. We all have a budget. The information is available. Why not publish it? Apply normal budgetary control to senior management.

Managements would have a

strong incentive to make the forecast neither too prudent nor too optimistic. Is it better to be sacked for under-achievement of your forecast, or to be taken over for under-forecasting the potential? They would dictate a wealth of information useful in evaluating a company's share because they would be keen to share the uncertainties. Analysts would probe management's projections and question the assumptions, a much more useful role than merely trying to elicit a forecast from management.

There is the potential for a

major improvement in the performance of UK plc by adopting this much more informative approach to reporting. The present set-up is practically designed to protect management from being accountable. The corporate disasters that hit the headlines are merely the tip of an iceberg of suboptimal senior management performance.

It is we accountants that have

allowed this situation to arise. We have let senior management off the hook. We fail to measure their performance. We still try to use historic cost

provision of the service. It is just a service. We don't actually own the prison. To which the sensible answer is "Pull the other one. Who else would want a prison?" There are accounting niceties, mostly to do with the impenetrable rules on leasing, but that in essence is all that is being argued about. The Government has dug itself in deeper, having realised that everything needs to be dressed up even more. So value for money is cited at all times and the pressure grows to pile more and more services, like car parking or catering, into the deals as window-dressing.

The most recent Treasury paper, *Partnerships For Prosperity*, published last month, had this to say: "Where the accounting analysis requires a PFI transaction to be treated in substance as borrowing, the procurer will almost certainly want to look at the deal again. The public body should examine the scope for reworking the deal so that it is clearly for the provision of services." Game, set and match to the ASB. The document continues: "Expanding the scope of the project can be a means of achieving greater risk transfer on good value for money terms." Which sounds just like all the corporate protestations over off-balance sheet financing rules. The document concludes that "as far as the PFI is concerned, it is important to remember that accounting treatment should not be a determinant of whether a project should go ahead; the test is value for money." Or as Sandra Thompson, the ASB's project director on the PFI, would put it: "The concern is that people might add more and more risky services to the projects to justify taking it off-balance

sheet." Governments are always caught like this. They cannot stomach criticism, so they set up independent regulators to distance themselves from future scandals. But this should not deter regulators.

Despite what the largest accounting firms may wish to say about the future of regulation in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with the Brussels authorities, the plans to set up a review board for the profession are still on course. By early next year the Government will have a complete package from the profession. And that would enable it to achieve its manifesto pledge on regulating the profession by the end of April. The only danger remaining is that the review board may want to then ask a few searching questions in the years to come. The large accounting firms, like the Treasury, may come to regret their views on the validity of regulation.



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ROBERT BRUCE

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## Not too taxing a calculation

THE problem of duplicate tax returns and the confusion this has brought to the world of self-assessment continues to amaze tax advisers. Three Counties Accountancy, a firm in Kendal, had a client who received two tax returns. Mindful of the chaos that duplicate returns have caused they contacted the Inland Revenue to ask which one should be treated as the duplicate. They then sent it back. Four days later they received a note

from the Revenue enclosing a calculation for the tax liability, "which I have been able to process without any need for correction". Not surprisingly authorities tell the firms are searching for a new name that will sum up their fresh start to a new future. But there are signs that this bright new strategy also involves jettisoning much of their past history and culture.

A note in the Christmas issue of PW's in-house magazine extols the virtues of *True and Fair*, the history of the firm that it had published two years ago. It quotes *The Times* as describing it as "a rattling good read". And then they point out that, if any member of staff wants a copy, they can have one free.

**ERNST in earnest**  
ERNST & YOUNG famously never beats about the bush when it thinks Chancellors of the Exchequer have not got a

clue. So it is good to read its robust report on the aftermath of the "green Budget". "We have yet to encounter a Chancellor who did not have the elimination of tax avoidance as a target," it says. "It is simply that some are noisier about it than others." It accuses ministers of "profound confusion" and of having become entangled in "moral fury". The Government must be hoping the firm has not decided to have a go at the morality of the Private Finance Initiative as well.

ROBERT BRUCE

## AN EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION

## A chance to go the distance for Diana

Wanted: 20 people to run the marathon as fundraisers for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund



The Times has secured 20 places for its readers to take part in the 1998 Flora London Marathon and help raise more than the target of £5 million for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

The Times 20 will be part of Team Flora, in which all the runners will be fundraising for the Memorial Fund, one of the two official charities for the race next year. A special panel has been set up to select readers wanting to 'Run for Diana' over the historic distance through the streets of London on Sunday, April 26.

The Times will also publish the complete results of the race — from the international heroes and heroines at the front to the determined joggers at the back.

There has already been unprecedented interest in the 1998 event. A record 100,000 people applied to enter, including 20,000 who specifically responded to an



invitation to run for the Memorial Fund.

This year, it was televised in more than 100 countries and 600,000 people lined the London streets to cheer on the 29,135 competitors, who ran from Greenwich to the Mall, triumphantly finishing the course of 26 miles 385 yards.

The fund-raising for the

Memorial Fund will be poignant for many of the competitors next year because they will be running on the streets where the coffin of the Princess was carried at her funeral on September 6. It will also be 10 years since she was the official starter of the 1988 event.

Applications should not

## THE TIMES DIANA TEAM COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

Read the form below carefully: the judges will base their decision on what you reveal in this form. All the winners who take part in the marathon on April 26 will be asked to sign a pledge form relating to their commitment to raise funds for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and to remit such funds by May 31, 1998. Our

entry forms for the chance to win a place in the Diana Team should reach the following address by January 9, 1998: *The Times* Diana Team, Flora London Marathon, PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY. Judging will take place on January 14 and the winners will be informed by telephone by January 19.

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever competed in a marathon before?

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

How much money did you raise?

Address \_\_\_\_\_

For which organisation/s?

Day tel \_\_\_\_\_

Have you raised funds for any organisation/s before?

Even tel \_\_\_\_\_

Describe how much you raised and how you did it

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Female  Male

Do you suffer from any illness/es?

Which category do you wish to enter?

Men  Women

Do you suffer from any illness/es?

Have you been in hospital for an operation? If yes, state what and when

Have you, a relative or friend, ever met Princess Diana? If yes, describe the occasion

Do you have any outstanding achievements of which you are proud? Tell us about them

What are your hobbies?

State, in not more than 50 words, why you deserve a place in this year's marathon

Please send the completed entry form to:

*The Times* Diana Team, London Marathon, PO Box 5071, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 7FY

**NEW MOVIES:** Kids may love it, but Geoff Brown has had enough of the formatted excesses of *Home Alone 3*

# Ma's out, Pa's out, let's talk crude

Another Christmas season, another kid home alone. Let us rejoice that he is not Macaulay Culkin, the increasingly obnoxious star of the first *Home Alone* films, currently enjoying the inevitable eclipse that adolescence brings. Not that Alex D. Linz in *Home Alone 3* deserves any great fanfare. This eight-year-old tyke has that slick, artificial manner born of acting out in some two dozen TV commercials (he also appeared in *One Fine Day*, as Michelle Pfeiffer's son). Shaggy auburn hair, husky voice. But penetrate the outer shell, and you might find electronic circuitry.

Linz's character, conveniently also called Alex, is certainly not programmed to show fear. Left in his ample house in Chicago's suburbs, ill with chickenpox, while his parents lead their busy lives, he greets the inevitable intruders with a few choice insults and a colossal array of booby-trap devices. Marbles lie under the welcome mat. A trunkful of books crashes down from the roof. Floorboards are loosened, buckets of glop carefully placed. Heath Robinson contraptions primed. This boy follows the Scout motto: "Be prepared."

Audiences are prepared, too, for a *Home Alone* movie leaves little room for filmmakers to manoeuvre. The director, Raja Gosnell, served as editor on the previous two films, so he knows the ropes only too well. The writer and producer, John Hughes, always a man fond of a formula, allows a few changes. In *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2*, the house intruders were bungling burglars. The present crew are gun-carrying professionals, hired by North Korean terrorists to retrieve a computer chip, crammed with American defence plans, which found its way through a large quirk of fate into little Alex's toy car.

Initially, they behave like any hard villains. By the end, they have become Alex's playthings, composure shattered by electric shocks, encasement in ice and a hundred other torments. If you wish to send get well cards, the actors' names are Rya Kihilsted, David Thornton and Lenny von Dohlen.

Children always take pleasure in seeing adults ritually humiliated. For them, fun of a sort — cruel, repetitive — can be guaranteed. Older viewers must content themselves with wincing at the violence, twiddling their thumbs, and noting how the script soft-pedals parental guilt by mentioning how absent adults can still keep in touch through mobile phones, faxes, or the Internet. More jaundiced souls can even take some comfort in the sheer rigidity of the *Home*



Check out that tousled coiffure and eyes gleaming with innocent fun. Wonder what he's doing with the wire cutters. This is Alex D. Linz of *Home Alone 3*, and he has cuteness to die for

alone formula, for if they keep making sequels as unoriginal as this, some day nobody will be at home at all.

Hollywood has no monopoly on family fun. Europeans can laud it out too, not with the same precision, perhaps, but with high spirits and a lack of pretence. Look at *Prince Valiant*, a German-British-Irish co-production shot in Snowdonia and Berlin. The talk, too, is resolutely late 20th century.

The director Anthony Hickox, usually associated with video bin ventures such as *Heirloom III: Hell on Earth*, attacks the material with untrammelled glee, jostling his camera in the action scenes, highlighting the comic-strip tone by venturing briefly into animation to bridge dif-

ferent parts of the story. Loud music is poured like a sauce over everything. Finesse is nowhere. And, once you give up looking for it, the film becomes quite enjoyable.

*George of the Jungle* is acceptable, too, although appreciation may be increased if you know of its origins in a late 1960s television cartoon series created by Jay Ward, master of crude animation and satirical humour. Like Tarzan, George is jungle-bred. Unlike Tarzan, he is physically inept, hitting trees as he swings through the vines.

Lots of *Home Alone* violence, then? Not a bit. As the stentorian narrator informs us: "No one dies in this movie, they just get really big booboos. Aside from the playful

stunts, the live-action characters are also kept busy following a routine story. George (Brendan Fraser, mobile face, large and friendly) rescues Ursula (Leslie Mann, winsome, thin), a ditzy heiress on an African safari with her unfeeling fiancé. George loves Ursula. Vice versa. Ursula takes him back to San Francisco, where he ruffles socialite feathers and swings round the Golden Gate Bridge.

But the jungle calls, along with its menagerie of creatures. Here technical complications enter. One minute we see trained live elephants; the next, George's elephant friend Shep is eerily computer-enhanced to frolic and pounce like a dog. We meet the handiwork of Jim Henson's

*Creature Shop*, as in *Ape*, the educated gorilla, given the lordly, exasperated voice of John Cleese. Still, the multi-media animal kingdom is kept reasonably controlled by the director Sam Weisman. *George of the Jungle* is passable family fun.

So where is the adult fun this week? In *Close-Up*, the latest Iranian film to reach British shores, although the journey has taken eight years.

Abbas Kiarostami is the director, and any admirer of his recent work, *And Life Goes On* or *Through the Olive Trees*, should need no prod-

ing to see that typically compassionate and brain-teasing piece. As in so much recent Iranian cinema, the film explores the mechanics and mys-

**Home Alone 3**  
Warner West End  
PG, 103 mins  
Remember the law of  
diminishing returns?

**Prince Valiant**  
Warner West End  
PG, 95 mins  
Enjoyable Arthurian  
nonsense

**George of  
the Jungle**  
Warner West End  
U, 93 mins  
Live-action debut of  
a cartoon hero

**Close-Up.**  
ICA Cinema, 93 mins  
Human wonder from  
Iran's Abbas Kiarostami

**Kiss Me, Guido**  
Metro, 15, 89 mins  
Gay comedy too eager  
to please the crowds

share his enjoyment in testing cinema's boundaries. But he never loses sight of his characters as people. Sabzian's defiance is that he wanted, for a moment, to enjoy respect and escape his impoverished life. Kiarostami encourages us to sympathise, and find goodness in all parties to the dispute.

**H**e also, as always, persuades us to watch the simplest things in new ways. For several entrancing seconds we follow a camion rolling down the road, to be buffeted by fate and kicked on its way a few minutes later. A driver gathers discarded flowers from a rubbish heap to decorate his taxi: an incidental detail that becomes imbued with lyric significance. Kiarostami makes us keep our eyes, hearts and minds open that is why he is one of the world's most important and necessary film-makers.

But will anyone pay attention to his film in the week before Christmas? The question, I fear, may be unanswered in Nanni Moretti's droll supporting short, where he monitors the first day's box-office takings of *Close-Up* in Rome. Two screenings net 57 admissions. All around Italy, however, *The Lion King* rakes in the life.

*Kiss Me, Guido* goes all out to please with breezy comedy about a gay New York actor in need of a room-mate. Enter an Italian pizza parlour owner, straight and impossible innocent. Tony Vitale's first feature offers bouncy disco sounds, amusing digs at avant-garde theatre, and a likeable cast (Nick Scotti, Anthony Barile, Anthony DeSando). But the weight of stereotypes and trite plotting eventually drag the film down.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF FRANK CAPRA'S MASTERPIECE  
JAMES STEWART DONNA REED

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SUGES ON THE HILL, TUDOR LIGHTS, SOUTHAMPTON, CAMBRIDGE ARCS, CENTRE, BOURNS, LEMINGTON SPA, FENNER, VERS  
EXTE, PIM, HOUSE, ABBEY, ETCY, MANCHESTER, CONNEXION, ARCS, READING, STEPHENSON, NEWCASTLE, TYNESIDE,  
CASTLE FERNDALE, GLASGOW, FILM THEATRE, VENGET, DUBLIN, VENGET, BELFAST, MELBOURNE, BRISBANE, VENGET, NEWPORT, ASIA, NORWICH

## SNAP VERDICT

### 'Ban this movie'

Every week, young film fans discuss the latest releases...

**HOME ALONE 3**  
Leslie Isidor Thomas, 19: So violent that I can't recommend this movie to adults, let alone children.

Don Young, 19: If you want your home left standing, do not let your kids see this.

Jethro Aukin, 19: Similar to *Godfather Part III*, in that it's not as good as Parts I and II.

Sharada Osman, 19: Like a children's version of *Pulp Fiction*. Ban this movie.

**PRINCE VALIANT**  
Leslie: This film has little going for it other than Stephen Moyer, who is going to be a great big superstar.

Don: The original comic was inspired, this film much less so.

Jethro: Began well but very quickly went downhill.

Sharada: I couldn't keep my eyes off Moyer. Step aside, Tom Cruise.

**KISS ME, GUIDO**  
Leslie: It has its comic moments. There are just too few of them.

Don: The actors and director do very well considering the script. The scriptwriter had obviously forgotten he was writing a comedy.

Jethro: A very insubstantial film. I remember when comedy meant laughs.

Sharada: Pleasant enough — I have seen worse films.

## MOTHER

CIC, PG, 1996

THIS delightful comedy by Albert Brooks, unaccountably passed over for theatrical release, follows the fortunes of a science-fiction writer who decides the best way to solve his problems might be to return to his mum, and live in his old room at home. Bickering and carping follow, not least over the contents of the fridge. Brooks himself fills the neurotic hero's shoes with ease. The film is made, though, by Debbie Reynolds, getting her first major role in 25 years as the mother used to her own eccentricities, and now faced by someone else's. A rental release.

## A BING CROSBY CHRISTMAS

VCI, E, 1979

FIFTY minutes of rapid clips from 15 years of musical Christmas cheer, dispensed on television by Bing Crosby.

## ANNA KARENINA

Warner, 12, 1997

ST PETERSBURG gleams in the sunlight. Ballrooms shimmer with gilt. But where are

## NEW ON VIDEO

surrounded by beaming family members, and showbiz colleagues young and old, from Fred Astaire to David Bowie.

## DANTE'S PEAK

CIC, 12, 1997

AN IDYLLIC town in the Pacific Northwest falls prey to the dangers of a belching volcano and cardboard characters. Here are Pierce Brosnan, earnest volcanologist, and Linda Hamilton, the single-parent mayor. There are children, one grandma and a dog. The special effects are very convincing: a pity no one thought to expend much attention on the script. A rental release.

## IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

PolyGram, U, 1946

FRANK CAPRA'S hymn to homey American values is no stranger to video, although this release benefits from restored image and sound and a 23-minute item about the making of the film. There are cornball touches, certainly, but the story of James Stewart

art's doubtless do-gooder in a small, cosy town has its interesting dark side, and it would take the most determined Scrooge not to be moved by the final moments, when Stewart pulls back from the brink.

## SELENA

Warner, PG, 1997

TEX-MEX singer Selena, shot dead two years ago by her fan club leader at the age of 23, receives the worshipful biopic treatment in this entertaining movie. The fatal incident itself is not even shown; instead we focus on Selena's family background and rapid rise to glory. What saves the film from being anodyne, apart from the music, is the performance of Jennifer Lopez, whose smile radiates enough sunshine and energy to see us all through winter. The director is Gregory Nava, best known for independent movies such as *El Norte*. A rental release.

GEOFF BROWN

## Passion with panache

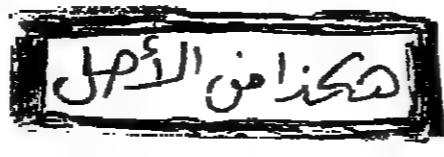
### JAZZ

Rick Margitza  
Pizza Express, W1

original, *August in Paris*. Where the average saxophonist frequently hurtles into the set's introductory number-like a sprinter off the blocks, Margitza paced himself, gradually insistent tenor sound into the kind of passionately rhapsodic rhetoric he required for later originals such as *Gypsies*, a bustling theme celebrating his Romanian heritage. Margitza spent five years studying in New Orleans, and he credits the city

with impressing upon him the importance of earthiness in music. Boudreax is a Louisiana native, and he brings a funky vigour to the music of his associate, constantly breaking up the beat into lively snare-led shuffles, or as on an intriguingly re-arranged version of Gershwin's *Embraceable You* — resorting to mallets to give an almost timpani-like effect to his soloing. In both the first set's closer, *Points to Ponder*, and in the bluesier originals in the second set, Boudreax proved the perfect foil to Margitza, cushioning his more contemplative moments yet driving him with panache through his music's more energetic passages.

Given the tasteful eloquence that characterised Margitza's handling of both his tenor and soprano horns during this performance, his ambition to emulate guitarist Pat Metheny by "reaching a lot of people without selling out" should be wholly within his grasp. CHRIS PARKER



## BRIEFLY NOTED

## Notre Disney

**MUSICALS:** Disney is preparing to adapt another of its blockbuster screen musicals as a stage show. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which has already taken a cool £550 million at cinema box offices, will follow *The Lion King* onto the Broadway boards some time in 1999, with a West End opening later. Alan Menken will write the music, Stephen Schwartz the lyrics. Unscheduled as yet is Disney's version of *Aida* – music by Elton John rather than Verdi.

**SCULPTURE:** Henry Moore, greatest of 20th-century British sculptors, will be celebrated throughout 1998 to mark the centenary of his birth on July 30. The National Gallery, Tate, British Museum and Sainsbury Centre in Norwich are all planning exhibitions, and a touring show will open at Yorkshire Sculpture Park in April and travel widely. There will be a big retrospective in Vienna, two documentaries on BBC2, and the publication of four hitherto unseen editions of Moore's graphics. In addition, the Henry Moore Foundation is planning to focus attention on the artist's home at Perry Green in Hertfordshire, where there will be an open day on June 20.

**THEATRE:** In what is generally agreed to have been a strong year for new drama, ten writers have been shortlisted for the Lloyds Private Banking Playwright of the Year Award. They are April de Angelis (*The Positive Hour*), Alan Ayckbourn (*Things We Do for Love*), Helen Blakeman (*Caravan*), Caryl Churchill (*The Blue Heart*), Martin Crimp (*Attempts on her Life*), Mike Cullen (*Anna Weis*), Patrick Marber (*Closer*), Martin McDonagh (*The Cripple of Inishmaan*), Conor McPherson (*The Weir*) and Tom Stoppard (*The Invention of Love*). David Hare's *Amy's View* was excluded from consideration at the author's request. The winner of the £25,000 award will be announced on January 29.

In Dublin, Isabel Carlisle finds that however the future may judge a giant of Pop Art, the present is still impressed



Mao (1973): "Warhol instinctively knew which images were sufficiently embedded in the American psyche for their manipulation to create a sensation. Then he doubled the impact by reproducing the mechanically produced image"

# Warhol's own 15 minutes of fame linger on

Eleven years after his death, the subject-matter of Andy Warhol's work, from Campbell's Soup cans to Chairman Mao, is still part of our daily lives and mythology. His influence on young artists has never been more evident – in their self-promotional skills as well as their art – and Warhol can be viewed at just enough of a distance to allow his stature in the second half of the 20th century to be seen to be as great as Marcel Duchamp's in the first half.

One generation hence and his revolutionary inventions of the multiple image and the silkscreening of paint on to canvas may not seem so significant. His great pantheon of the visual icons of our age will certainly have begun to fade, and it is hard to imagine that Warhol's reputation will not fade with it.

However, the retrospective of Warhol's paintings and sculpture currently on show in Dublin presents an unashamedly positive view of his artistic career. Here we have Warhol floating, free of the dead weight of his bad movies and the blatant commercialism of his late, avidly sought portrait commissions and advertisements.

With most of the loans coming from the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, the career of this giant of Pop Art can be traced in its entirety from 1956 to 1986. Versions of almost all the key works are present: *Tuna Fish Disaster*, *Jackie*, *Cow Wallpaper*, *Skull*, *Myths*, *Guns* and the 1986 *Self-Portrait* among them.

The show begins with the pen and ink sketches of angels of death and can be Warhol's Slovakan mother, Julia Warhola. They have the same decorative, calligraphic line and fantastical imagination that Warhol used in the 1950s for the advertisements by which he first made a living.

Disconcertingly, in these early drawings Warhol treats

all his subject-matter the same way, whether it is a woman being presented with a flower or a boy injecting himself with heroin. The ink lines are blotted to make them look artistic and give the illusion of printing, a technique that achieves the effect that the later silkscreens on canvas did: emotional neutrality.

However horrifying the scenes in these paintings – an empty electric chair or a car crash with mangled bodies – Warhol deflected accusations of sensationalism by feigning reportage. It was a neat trick

• Here we have Warhol floating free of the dead weight of his bad movies

and one which is used today by, among others, the video artist Gillian Wearing, winner of the 1997 Turner Prize.

In finding a method of transferring photographic images to canvas using the misaligned register of newspaper printing and the colours of neon signs, Warhol was both subverting artistic tradition and broadening the possibilities of painting. He first used the silkscreening technique in 1962 to create such works as *Three Coca-Cola Bottles* and *Gold Marilyn*.

The latter juxtaposes two discs of canvas painted gold, one with the publicity image of Monroe that Warhol was to repeat again and again silkscreened on to it, the other left blank. Like much of Warhol's work, one wonders whether to take it at face value or probe for deeper meanings.

Duchamp put his finger on Warhol's art when he said: "If original in Milan.

For Warhol, nothing was sacred. But by the time of his death he had devoured so many icons that he had himself become a *monstre sacré*.

• Andy Warhol: *After the Party – Works 1956-1986*, sponsored by ACC Bank, is at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (00353 612900), until March 22.

The Dublin curators have used the succession of small rooms opening off long corridors at the former Royal Hospital at Kilmainham to show single works. *Silver Clouds*, made of helium-filled plastic film, drift inside one room, while *Cow Wallpaper* – the lurid pink head of a Jersey cow silkscreened lifesize on to yellow in a repeating pattern – covers the walls of another. Half the length of one corridor is taken up with Warhol's silkscreened photograph of a kitschy coloured drawing of Leonardo's *Last Supper*. Shown double, side by side with the repeat image, it is twice the length of the original in Milan.

For Warhol, nothing was sacred. But by the time of his death he had devoured so many icons that he had himself become a *monstre sacré*.

## Designers to the world

John Russell

Taylor on the  
Swedes who  
changed the look  
of every home

much light as possible indoors during the dark days of a northern winter.

There are also significant works by contemporaries such as Voysey and Mackintosh. Evidently we are dealing with the tone of the times, when a number of important artists and designers were naturally heading in the same direction.

This does to some extent answer the question a friend asked me at the exhibition: "All very pretty, I grant you, but where does it get us today?" The past is always implicit in the present, but here particularly so. The final section reminds us of the way the Larssons' taste for natural or brightly painted wood, their white or pale-coloured walls, the graceful, rather Japanese asymmetry of their arrangements, all fed into the Modern movement's repertoire of effects and the Bauhaus way with textiles and metalwork. Though the Larssons were not alone, their role was crucial.

The first impression of the

show is one of delicate period charm. The volumes in which Carl Larsson recorded his family life in Sundborn, like *Ett Hem* and *At Solisidan*, were universal bestsellers, and it is not difficult to see why. They, and more especially the watercolour originals, encapsulate an ideal vision of life which seemed at the time to be within reach of ordinary people, and now has an added charge of intense nostalgia.

But it should be emphasised that, while undoubtedly light-weight in the overall rustic pattern of his time, Larsson was a brilliant draughtsman with a finely unconventional sense of composition. The watercolours, whether or not regarded as "mere" illustrations, sparkle with life.

His larger and more determinedly serious paintings look rather anaemic when compared with the nearby work of his Scandinavian Symbolist contemporaries, but for all his success with many major mural commissions, he does not seem to have been cut out for the monumental. It was as an intimist that he first made his name, and as such he has triumphantly survived a century's whirligig of fashion.

Indeed, practically all of Paul Delaroche's painting is history, in a more literal sense. Few people realise that a number of other historical set-pieces from the same hand are not far away, in the Wallace Collection.

Delaroche was already dead and well past the zenith of his reputation in the late 1850s and early 1860s when most of the paintings were bought, but the Marquess of Hertford was of an independent mind. If the pictures in the current show at the Wallace strike us first of all as an illustrated history, suggesting to the interested spectator what Joan of Arc could have looked like in prison, or the Princes in the Tower, they are much better as paintings than one might suppose. Delaroche was undoubtedly one of the great image-makers: even if you do not like the way the canvas is painted, you never forget the picture Delaroche's imagination has formed.

• Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, SW7 (0171-933 8349), Mon noon-5.30pm, Tues-Sun 10am-5.30pm, until Jan 18. £5, concs £3



Carl Larsson's *Christmas Eve 1904*: a typical projection of an idealised home life

## History's broad canvases

It has been unkindly said of the early 19th-century Italian painter Hayez that to the Italians he is Delaroche, to everyone else he is Delaroche. John Russell Taylor writes: Of course, to appreciate the barb you would have to know who and what Delaroche was, which, considering his unfashionability, has not been easy for 150 years. But in the past few years Delaroche's standing in Britain has improved.

This is largely because of his large painting of *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* (1833), now one of the most popular paintings in the National Gallery.

There is even a romantic story attached to it. At the time

of the great Tate flood in 1928

the painting was rolled up in

the basement, considered too

quaint and Victorian to show.

It appeared to be irreversibly

damaged, and was left as it

was. So when someone finally

looked at it again in the 1970s,

it had dried out so slowly and

naturally that it was hardly

damaged at all. It was restored

and put on show in the

National Gallery, and the rest

is history.

Indeed, practically all of Paul Delaroche's painting is history, in a more literal sense. Few people realise that a number of other historical set-pieces from the same hand are not far away, in the Wallace Collection.



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MEGASTORES



How is Birmingham Repertory Theatre planning to spend its £5.7 million of lottery funding? June Ducas talks to the artistic director

# Snowed under with money

**W**ith regional theatres in the slough of despond — some going dark, others scrapping and saving to prevent a final curtain call — it is glad news that the Birmingham Repertory Theatre has been awarded a £5.7 million stabilisation grant from the Arts Council lottery fund. Wiping out the theatre's £2 million deficit, the one-off sum of money will be paid over three years, more than doubling the annual subsidy. It will give the company breathing space to initiate ambitious new plans aimed at keeping it out of the red thereafter.

In September of last year, in a radical move to assist arts organisations before they bleed to death from lack of day-to-day cash, the Arts Council launched a pilot stabilisation scheme. For the first time £17 million of lottery money would be spent on strengthening artistic endeavour, instead of on a plethora of capital projects. Early this year, 15 out of 129 applicants were selected. Assigning expert advisers to help to prepare individual strategies, the Arts Council announced the awards this autumn, with Birmingham Rep taking the lion's share.

Previously, the council's policy (or non-policy, depending in your stance) of cutbacks across the board meant equal misery for all — but no solutions. Apart from putting numerous companies in jeopardy, it diminished the quality of work.

"The grant liberates our artistic ends," says Bill Alexander, the company's artistic director for nearly five years. "In the past, to balance the budget, we had to alter large-scale works with two or three-handers that are inappropriate for the size of our stage. Now I can plan a

series of six epic productions each year. In baseball terms, we may play fewer games, but the strike rate will be better."

Better not least because the productions will have an extended life — a stimulating factor for the actors, directors and set designers who invest so much creative energy and emotions in them. "Until now, after a mere six-week run the show was thrown into a skip," says Alexander. At the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he was an associate director for 14 years, it would have remained in the repertoire for several years. From next September, when the stabilisation programme gets off the ground, the company's productions will tour at home and abroad — thus earning additional income.

What impressed the Arts Council about Birmingham's bid for cash was its concern for artists, tomorrow's audiences, and

new writing. "Actors, as Peter Hall has said, have been subsidising the theatre for years," Alexander says. "We intend to pay them better. After all, we are asking people like Antony Sher and Simon Callow to leave their homes, go on the road and live in digs. However, if our work is unique we will be offering them marvellous artistic opportunities."

Part of the company's adventurous game plan is to reinvigorate the repertoire. "We can't go on doing Wilde, Shaw and Priestley till the cows come home," Alexander says. "There is a limit to how thrilling the unipersonal production of *The Winslow Boy* can be. Even John Godber, Willie Russell and Ayckbourn are becoming stale. The trouble is that contemporary dramatists have been stifled — forced to keep down the number of roles in their plays." Consequently, few dare tackle a scene that involves more

than two characters speaking to each other.

Reserving £1 million specifically for commissioning new work, the company can bring about a sea change. "We want to challenge writers to test themselves against our great dead playwrights, who were adept at juggling five or six characters on stage at once."

Aside from the 900-seat main house, the Rep's intimate studio space will concentrate on fostering burgeoning young talent whose writing touches the up-and-coming generation. Over two seasons, ten new plays will be premiered, chosen on merit alone. A permanent group of eight actors will play them in repertory, taking a couple out to the local community. "Nothing quickens the learning process

for a dramatist like having who missed the Rep's magical 1993 rendering of *The Snowman* based on Raymond Briggs's modern fairytale, with a lengthened score by Howard Blake, should immediately besiege the box office — it is on until the end of January.

Certainly, he has had tremendous success at Birmingham, which is why he is loyally supported by the local authority and the West Midlands Arts Board. National critics have praised his direction of Harold Pinter's *Old Times*, with Tim Pigott-Smith, and productions of the Bard including *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*. Last season, Janet Suzman's superb version of *The Cherry Orchard* received undiluted plaudits. A joint production with Johannesburg's Market Theatre, it was the start of cross-cultural exchanges. And those

who missed the Rep's magical 1993 rendering of *The Snowman* based on Raymond Briggs's modern fairytale, with a lengthened score by Howard Blake, should immediately besiege the box office — it is on until the end of January.

Apart from highly regarded classics, Alexander envisages varying the bill with what he calls "discovery" plays — very fine dramas that are seldom performed. For ages, he has wanted to present Thomas Dekker's masterpiece, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, and an adaptation by Peter Whelan (with whom he has a close relationship) of Disraeli's novel *Two Nations*. Both demand huge casts and extravagant sets. If the Rep's prospectus flour-

## NEW CLASSICAL CDS: Brits on Broadway, spice for Christmas and scintillating Prokofiev

### MUSICAL

John Higgins

■ CABARET Friedman/Dench/Pryce/NSO/Edwards *TER Masterworks CDTER 1210 (two CDs) ★★★*

WITH Chicago set for long residence in the Strand it is no bad moment to revisit Kander and Ebb's earlier hit *Cabaret*. The cast of this 1993 recording is mainly British but the all-round verve generated, especially at the Kit Kat Klub, is strictly Broadway. For that, credit must go to the punchy conducting of John Owen Edwards. But the presence of two old hands has also surely had its effect.

Judi Dench, London's first Sally Bowles, is back, this time as Fraulein Schneider. And Fred Ebb, who provided the lyrics, now also sings some of them in a gravelly voice as the Jewish fruiterer who marries her. Authenticity is assured.

Maria Friedman is careful not to make Sally too much of a star, a trap Liza Minnelli fell into in the movie. Miss Bowles is an interval dropout, more talented in the bedroom than the green room, as Friedman suggests with a husky and sexy delivery. Cliff (Greg Edelman), the boy who falls for her, is not much of a part musically and will always be under the shadow of the MC, a masterly study in greed and opportunism from Jonathan Pryce. Note too John Mark Ainsley as a member of the Hitlerjugend.

### ORCHESTRAL

Barry Millington

■ PROKOFIEV *Symphony No 5; Romeo & Juliet* New York Philharmonic/ Maser Teldec 4509 9630/2 ★★★

THE New York Philharmonic and its music director Kurt Maser visited the Proms in 1996 and gave a memorable concert including Brahms's Violin Concerto with Mutter the soloist, and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* music. The Maser account of the Brahms was released on disc last month, and now the Prokofiev, recorded in New York last year, is issued, coupled with the same composer's Fifth Symphony.

Any asperities in that Prom performance have been ironed out. The silky strings and sensual saxophone in *Juliet the Young Girl* are more refined, while the music of Romeo and Juliet together is rapturous. The orchestra sounds, if possible, even better in the symphony. The end of the first movement, for example, offers some splendidly rasping brass choruses and deep, sonorous string tone. In the slow movement, the string sound acquires an apt glacial purity and an unearthly beauty as the music glides to its tranquil conclusion. All the stops are pulled out for a scintillating finale.

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## Hooked on Never-say-die-Land

**A**ccording to Barrie's stage-directions to *Peter Pan*, Captain Hook is "never more sinister than when he is most polite, and the elegance of his diction, the distinction of his demeanour, show him to be of a different class from his crew". Add a modicum of sly self-mockery, and the ability so to sneer that his thin moustachios slant up to his eyebrows, and he could be talking of Ian McKellen. His Hook is all quivering preciosity, mournful gentility and Old Eonian world-weariness. He is, as Barrie said he must be, the kind of pirate who says "sorry" to those he makes walk the plank — and, as Barrie didn't say, he is capable of pronouncing the thing "physaik".

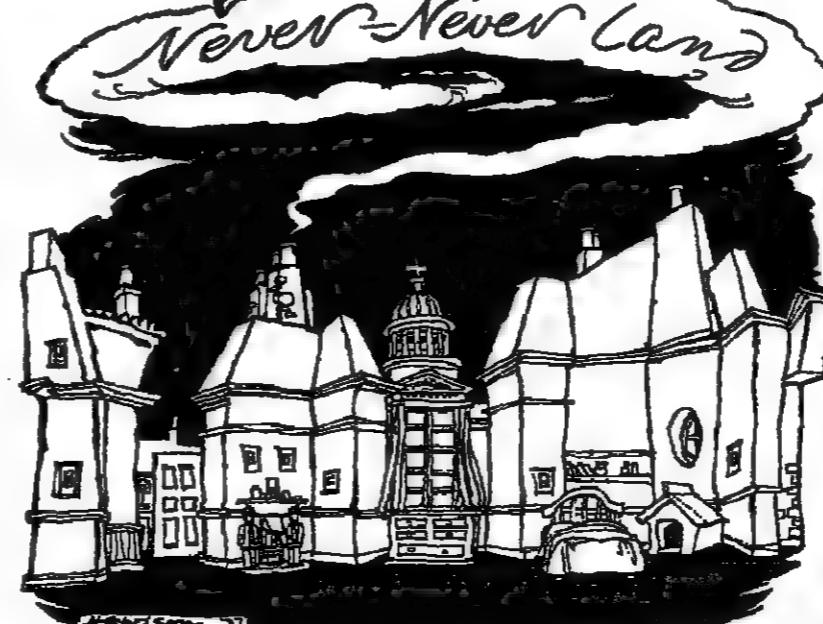
The version of *Peter Pan* at the National is directed by John Caird and is essentially the same, down to an ending not in the

original, as the one he and Peter Tunn created in 1982. There is a narrator in the avuncular form of Alec McCowen, who ambles about in deerstalker kit looking like Barrie and giving us extracts from those cosily verbose stage-directions. And Peter Pan himself is not a swagging girl in drag but a boy: in Daniel Evans's performance a nice mix of callow bravado and skinny, angular vulnerability.

Once again the designer is John Napier, this time with the great Olivier revolve at his creative command. He starts with the elaborate outside and snug innards of the Darlings' Bloomsbury house. Then it's off, via St Paul's to the most marvellous Never Land anyone could have imagined, let alone seen. It is a slowly-twirling mix of weeping willows and firs, lilies and cacti and poppies, cherry blossom and a tapering crag and a knotty, gnarled tree.

Napier certainly creates some stunning effects. Though Tuesday's premiere was slowed up by a diving mermaid dislocating her shoulder, or fin, the scene in the lagoon is especially cleverly done, with Botticelli's lovelies contemplating their fishes' tails while boys splash off a sponge rock into shiny, undulating sheets that look like turquoise waves. But never do you feel that the lovingly handled spectacle interferes with clarity or flow.

Perhaps the tone is lighter and, when on the pirate-ship commences, camper than it reputedly was back in 1982; but I don't think anybody in the audience was complaining. Let those who feel surly complain of the play's undoubtedly sentimental, and those of earnest



Ian McKellen fits Barrie's view of Hook, and Daniel Evans is a brave Peter

disposition inspect its Freudian undercurrents. Yes, it is recognisably the work of the Barrie who tried to please his rejecting mother by dressing up and imitating her favourite son, who had died in an accident. Yes, everyone in the play craves a woman, not for the old, obvious reasons, but a nurse and fuss over him. Yes, the hero tries indefinitely to prolong an idealised boyhood, as poor, sad Barrie would have liked to have done.

But do you care when you can see

McKellen gravely hammering it up on his roccoco prop and skull-decorated deck? Or when you watch Evans's Pan and Claude Blakley's Wendy fly under the stars and over Big Ben? Or when a Tinker Bell with a sort of Mae West mumble swirls in spotlight round the lost boys' cave? No, I don't think so.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

● This review appeared in late editions of The Times yesterday

## Bizarre — but seldom boring

**T**he somewhat chaotic autograph of Donizetti's *Elisabetta* was unearthed yesterday from the bowels of Covent Garden ten years ago, and the Royal Opera gave the work its premiere in concert form on Saturday, a nice salute to the composer in his bicentenary year.

Unfortunately, not even the most determinedly romantic journalist could hail it as a long-lost masterpiece. It is very interesting, in its prologue apart from anything else, and that's about it.

It started out as an early *opéra semi-légère* in 1827 in Naples under the impenetrable title of *Oto mesi in due ore* ("Eight Months in Two Hours"). It was often revised but less often performed in Italy at the time; Donizetti turned it into an *opéra comique* for Paris in the 1830s, when it failed to reach the stage (the theatre went bankrupt); and then brought it to London and combined the two versions, in Italian, for Her Majesty's; once more, it failed to reach the stage (one reason was that the theatre burnt down) and ended up in the Bow Street cellars.

The plot is almost as picaresque. The resourceful hero's father, falsely accused of some misdemeanour, has been exiled to Siberia. She decides to walk to Moscow (or St Petersburg, take your pick from the text) to clear his name (first act) and succeeds (third act). The second act is crowded with events: she encounters first the false accuser, who out of guilt has become a ferryman on the River Kama, then a horde of Tartars who threaten; there is a hurricane, "the river bursts its banks" — the stage directions announce handily, and Elisabetta is saved by floating downstream in the false accuser's dead daughter's coffin. The Royal

### OPERA

Elisabetta

Festival Hall

Opera must be very glad that it wasn't having to stage all this.

There is an unfinished feel to the score as performed; had Donizetti seen it into the theatre, he would doubtless have revised and filled out some of the bald recitative, tightened one or two passages and turned some corners more gracefully, but the editorial team has rightly given it to us as the composer left it. As always with Donizetti, even routine passages are suddenly illuminated with a touch of instrumental colour or a startling harmonic progression that really make you sit up.

*Elisabetta* is bizarre, but seldom boring. The intervention of the horde — "A rolicking band of Tartars we" would be W.S. Gilbert's version — is great fun.

Carlo Rizzi, a renowned Donizettian, conducted with innate sympathy, and the good, solid cast gave them all — as listeners to next Monday's broadcast will hear. The needle-fine Andrea Rose negotiated *Elisabetta*'s coloratura with aplomb (she has a merry waltz finale) and Alastair Miles brought great distinction to the false accuser's big scene of remorse.

There is a barely relevant comic character, sung with engaging style by Alessandro Corbelli, and the young Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez took over at short notice as the father; his voice is as yet on the dry side, but he is intensely musical, with no fear of top notes and made much of his substantial third-act number. Yes, very interesting indeed.

RODNEY MILNES

## PUBLISHED IN A LIFETIME: BOOKS THAT SHOWED THE WAY

## Bel Mooney found her horizons broadened by Sylvia Plath

In 1965, in my first term at University College London, my then boyfriend gave me *Ariel* (published by Faber that year) "to broaden your mind". He was right: my course offered one optional modern paper which ended on the eve of the Second World War. I immersed myself in her poetry's savage depths like someone stumbling across an oasis in what seemed like a desert of Beowulf, Milton and Pope. At 20, I identified with Plath's almost-hysterical self-assertion — what Richard Wilbur called "brilliant negative". It led me to Ted Hughes, of course, and to Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Hart Crane and Theodore Roethke.

Now I can return to Plath and value afresh her genius in transforming a personal, crippling disability into universal art. I have lost the youthful yearning for "relevance", although in fact the poems are closer to the dark ambivalences of a married woman with children. *Ariel* still stands as a revolutionary text, its axe-words splitting the silence of self-denial and ringing out the equal right to rage against the darkness, but embrace it too. In 1974, reading that Philip Larkin had produced his first volume of poetry for ten years, I rushed out and bought two copies of *High Windows*. Then I responded

ed to the witty misanthropy of *Vers de Société* and *This is the Verse*, as well as the sweet sadness of *The Explosion*. Now I return again and again to poems like *Show Saturday, Going, The Trees and Cut Grass*, embracing their quietly lyrical conversation with a relief that would have shocked my younger self. Middle age, perhaps — but also an impotent rage against the rebranded blandness of this "new" Britain. How Larkin would have set on his hounds of language!

During the Seventies I discovered the novels of Patrick White, and read all of them voraciously, even registering for a (still unwritten) PhD. *The Tree of Man* stands tall even in White's rich, dense forest — one of the great spiritual novels of this half-century. A young man, Stan Parker, hacks out a home and a life in the bush, takes a wife, fights in the Great War, experiences flood and fire, grows old and dies in his garden, surrounded now by tacky suburbs — leaving his wife Amy to mourn and life to go on. The novel is about that majesty within the silences of "ordinary" people. In elliptical, daringly poetic, yet paradoxically flat prose, *The Tree of Man* revivifies ideas of grace and redemption with an intensity that dazzles the unbeliever.

## Michèle Roberts was sparked by new light shed on the secrets of Jane Eyre

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë wrote to her publisher, George Smith: "You should be very glad that books cannot talk to each other as well as to their readers". Conceive the state of your warehouse if such were the case... Terrible too would be the quarrelling... Still I like the notion of a mystic whispering among the lettered leaves — and perhaps at night... such a whispering may be heard — by those who have ears to hear."

One of those who did listen was Jean Rhys. She read *Jane Eyre* and wrote the story which lurks in its silences. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Rhys took one of the works of genius of the 19th century and turned it inside-out to create one of the works of genius of the 20th century.

Genius, a term invented by men and used to describe men, excludes women, but I use it of both Brontë and Rhys to point out the paradox of their achievement: both of them wrote brilliantly, as no one had done before, about women, and both force us to question whether femininity isn't a kind of strait-jacker in some cases.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* (published in 1966) this brilliance ensures that not only is Bertha Mason's story brought slap bang up to date, but

that *Jane Eyre* itself can never be the same again. Charlotte Brontë's Mrs Rochester is composed from 19th-century white, middle-class terrors of black people, female sexuality and madness, all rolled together into a figure who's part diseased animal and part vampire. Rhys takes us back to the beginning of the story, to an island paradise lost; it's an astonishing novel, which stands on its own. I first read it when I was 15 or so — and have felt haunted by it ever since.

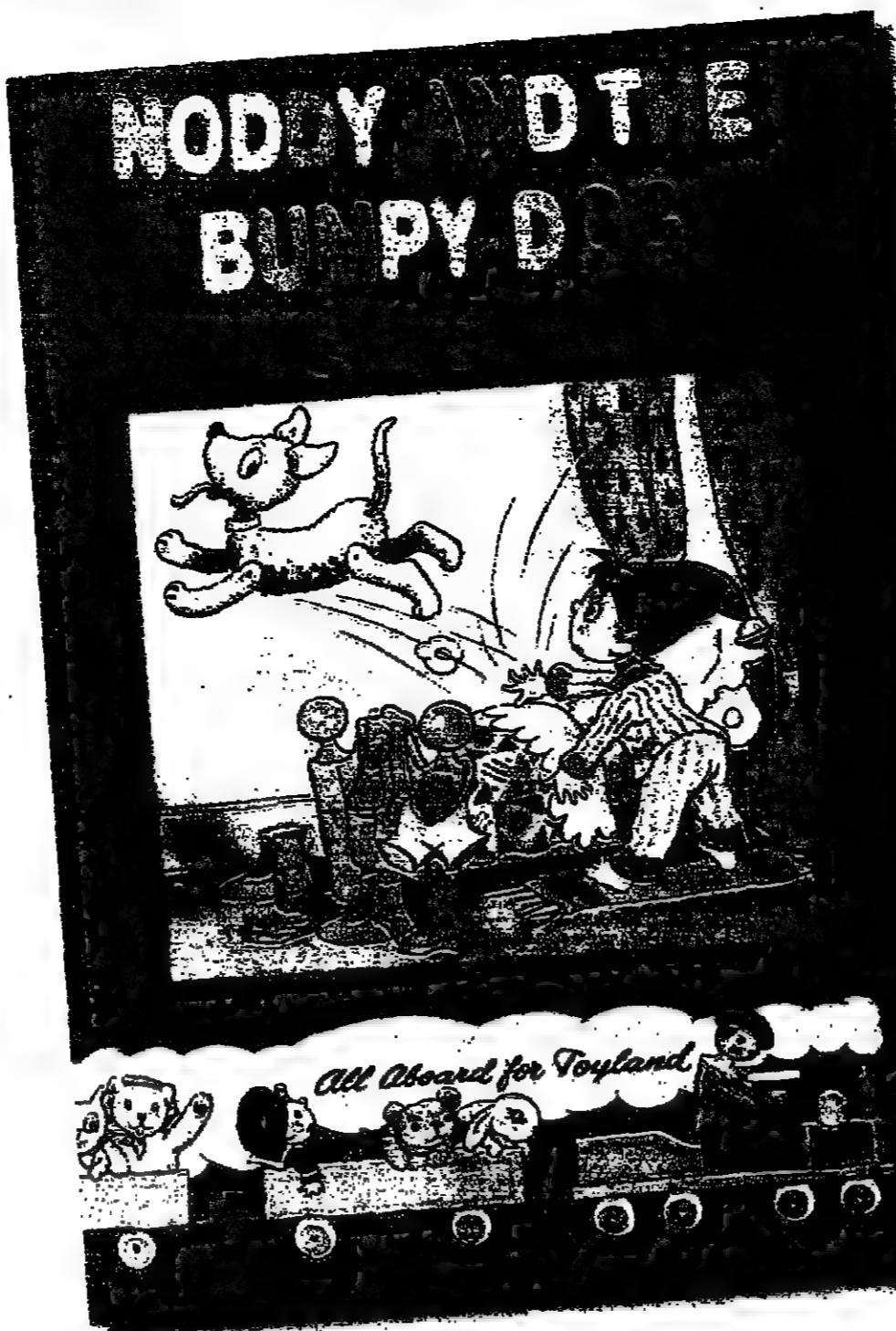
A personal definition of a classic is a novel I never tire of rereading. Paul Bailey's *Gabriel's Lament* (1968) is that. I came upon it after catching up on all the women writers left out of my education. It was charming to encounter a male writer who wanted to investigate what makes men tick. *Gabriel's Lament* is a masterpiece of sly, wrenching, tragic-comedy that takes suburban life and fathers and sons and immortalises them through the brilliance of its dialogue, its sparkling jokes.

*The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) by Muriel Spark is another such novel, completely surprising, funny and cruel. Spark changed our literary landscape with her books: this tale is unmatchable and unmissable; gloriously and insistently original.

## A gift they'll never forget.

By Heart  
101 Poems to Remember  
edited with an introduction by Ted Hughes

ff  
faber and faber



## Felipe Fernández-Armesto says thanks to Noddy



Influences which last longest start in childhood. Thanks to Enid Blyton's *Noddy* books, I still overvalue personal independence, love the underdog, crave cakes at teatime and mistrust Mr Plod.

The writer has been reviled for understanding language but you don't notice that when you're patronised by everybody and baby-talk seems the natural form of adult expression.

She has been condemned as politically incorrect, but Toy Town is nothing if not plural society, where Sally Skittle and the Wobbly Man are unencumbered by their disabilities. Her books are not well written, but their greatness lies in the depiction of character. Noddy is one of the most under-estimated creatures in English literature: a subtle, complex personality, whose moodiness, selective arrogance and wildness of judgment repeatedly test the affection of his readers and friends.

Busybodies may banish him from the shelves, but his place in tradition is secure. I love best the story of *Noddy and the Bumpy Dog* (1957) — a typical fable in which the under-appreciated outsider, "waggy and licky and noisy and rough" — saves the day and wins acceptance.

A dog is also the hero in my favourite Iris Murdoch novel, *The*

*Nice and the Good* (1968). I discovered Iris Murdoch and Oxford in the same moment and they are confused in my mind. Her books, in which the characters' intellectual integrity never inhibits their spontaneity, perfectly mirrored the real life of the university. The talent in which she surpasses every other living English novelist is in making people behave utterly surprisingly, yet with total consistency, so that every twist seems both strange and convincing.

A few writers of fiction are models for historians: from Borges, for example, you learn how to approach objectivity by shifting perspective, from Lampedusa, how to evoke a sense of period. Iris Murdoch's insights into the routine nature of surprise have helped me understand the characters I have to deal with. Tiresomely, they write their own plots and do it with a freedom an unassisted imagination could never give them.

There are a lot of history books in my life, but for the present purpose one elects itself: Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China* (1950-1960). Like all geniuses, Needham could be misled by an excess of cleverness. He espoused an odd, faintly mystical mixture of High Church Anglicanism and naive Maoism. He had daft convictions, such as that undocumented Chinese explorers had founded Mesoamerican civilisation.

Yet his masterpiece is unmatched in our times for most of what I admire in history: scholarship, ambition, sensibility, fidelity to evidence, boldness in argument, impassioned curiosity, unlimited range — and sheer mastery, sure plotline amid vast oceans of material.

He died leaving it unfinished, but the first few volumes changed the way I looked at the world. When those creatures of my imagination, the Galactic Museum-Keepers, look back on our past, they will centre their display on China and crum Western civilisation into a corner of some small vitrine.

## Malcolm Bradbury steered his course by Saul Bellow's compass and travelled through a winter night



When I first started out as a young writer and obsessive novelist in the mid-Fifties, my ambitions were shaped by a small number of central books. I'm sure every writer has a pile of such books: books that are more than books, that create the belief that writing matters, that literary vocation is important, that there are always fresh ways in which the narrative of one's age can be told.

I'd read widely in fiction: many Victorian novels, a lot of the great "modern novelists", like Lawrence, Forster, Woolf, Gide and Mann. All had a considerable influence, but in truth by the mid-Fifties the modern novel was already not just a generation but a political and artistic culture away.

The important books are closer in time, the ones that catch era, generation, mood. I found them first mostly in Existentialist Paris. Two books that greatly mattered to me were Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, first published in 1942, and Samuel Beckett's magnificent tragicomedy, *Molloy*, which appeared in 1951.

Yet I felt far greater affinity with American fiction, then beginning to sweep into Britain. Somewhere at the start of the Fifties I picked up a book by a writer I hadn't heard of: it was Saul Bellow's second novel *The Victim*. It too had the prevailing existential anxieties; it acknowledged the Holocaust and nuclear unease, the mood of urban aimlessness, of moral disaster seeking moral redemption. Written in English, it deployed a vital, near-lyrical prose. It influenced my writing, steered my way into American fiction. Like many British

writers, I've followed Bellow's work with passion ever since, and regard his *Hertzog* (1964) as one of the best modern books.

It wasn't until the end of the Sixties I found an English novel that had such a strong and direct impact. Then came John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), to my mind one of the best British postwar novels. It built a cunning, extraordinary bridge between the grand Victorian novel, with its social grasp, and the anxious, textually self-critical modern novel — where character is a paradox, narrative a problem, the author's authority always unsure.

A more recent postwar novel joins my list of core books. My own writing changed, as writing does: I grew ever more fascinated by the multiplicity of the means of fiction, the extraordinary richnesses of

genre. In 1981 Ialo Calvino published *If on a winter's night a traveller*. Maybe it takes another writer to love it as much as I do. It joins the special list of novels about novels — *Tristram Shandy*, *Jacques the Fatalist*, *Ulysses* — that show the complexity, variety, wonder of the form. Ten different stories in different genres are started. There's a reader (indeed, two of them) in the text. It's a book about the great play of fiction: why need it, what it does to us.

For some time it's seemed clear to me that I've been living through an age of the novel. Each generation finds its distinctive uses for fiction, generates its own originalities. When the record is properly written, the novels of this century's second half will, I believe, seem quite as powerful as those of the widely studied first. For me the books I've mentioned have special meaning, forming the tiny pile I'd despair to be without. But they also form milestones in the great 20th-century journey of fiction, which has been a good one for us all.

## Howard Davies fled Manchester in the company of David Storey

The year of my birth, 1951, has never been cited as a great turning point in the world of letters. And some of the long-lived 20th-century writers for whom I care most, John Cowper Powys, for example, or Wyndham Lewis, had written their best works well before then.

But a good few of the most

loved read and reread books on my shelves were first published in my lifetime. Erich Heller's *The Disintegrated Mind* — essays in modern German literature and thought — appeared first in 1952. I did not, I think, read the first edition immediately on publication; my copy is dated 1966. As a teenager, I first inhaled the excitement of Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke, Spengler and Kafka through Heller. The theory of eternal recurrence was heady stuff for a Manchester Grammar School boy in the Sixties and it remains so today. No other work of literary criticism has left me with such an enduring love for its subject. Even Spengler's *Decline of the West* remains suffused in a rosy glow.

But wild-eyed enthusiasm for gloomy Germans was no basis for a career, so I drifted towards modern history and thence to diplomacy. My interest was lukewarm, however, until I read A. J. P. Taylor's *Origins of the Second World War*, first published in 1961. There remain few historians who, like Taylor, can reach the general reader with a sharp and original thought. Perhaps in Norman Davies we have found another, but he needs 1,500 pages to make his point.

David Storey is not a septic though his prose is as limp as Taylor's. *Flight into Camden*, published in 1961, is for me, his masterpiece. Perhaps, as an ex-northern grammar schoolboy in London, I identified too much with Yorkshire-born Margaret, who flees south to an adulterous affair with a teacher in Camden. Though I was from the other side of the Pennines, my teacher was an unmarried Australian and we lived in Islington — a wholly different cultural landscape.

The clash of cultures and mores

was, nonetheless, quite sharp. And I was thrilled by Storey's insights into my human condition. For years I bored friends with aggressive argument to the effect that Storey is Britain's greatest postwar novelist. Even Spengler's *Decline of the West* remains suffused in a rosy glow.

But wild-eyed enthusiasm for

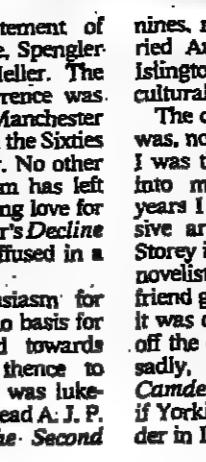
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## Roger Scruton was cloistered in Eliot's mysterious rose garden

Many writers publishing in my lifetime have had a profound effect on me, even though no single work encapsulates their influence. This is true — to take four examples at random — of Leavis, Larkin, Plath and Solzhenitsyn. Asked to choose three books, rather than three authors, I finally settled on these *Four Quartets*, by T. S. Eliot. *Philosophical Investigations*, by Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the trilogy of novels (*Molloy*, *Malones Dies*, and *The Unnameable*) by Samuel Beckett. These works have two very important things in common: first, that every word and every implication are meticulously weighed; secondly, that the movement (whether of thought or feeling) is in each case entirely compelled and never imported. In Eliot, Wittgenstein, and Beckett, you encounter three contrasting forms of literary urgency, in which words flow from the being of the creator with a rightness and exactness that cannot be improved upon. (So, at any rate, it seems to me.) And with this formal perfection there goes an unbreakable sincerity which forces us to respond to these works, not as literature only, but as visions of the human world — which is to say, as literature in its highest form.

I came across *Four Quartets* at school; it was one of a small collection of books chosen by Faber for its first series of paperbacks. I did not understand, nor do I fully understand even now, the meaning of that rose garden, with its invisible presences, and its dry concrete pool. But the words sounded deep within me. I was a modern adolescent, severed from prayer and abstinence and from every religious idea. *Four Quartets* conveyed a new insight into the modern world. Under the impact of those carefully distilled images, the place in which I found myself

became a place of pilgrimage. The modern soul could still, Eliot wrote, find redemption and tranquillity in the midst of disease. Was this a trick of language? Thirty-five years later, I can say with conviction that it was not.

Beckett too was favourite reading matter at school. I loved those careful, tetchy sentences shaped from the language of accusation but rebuking no one in particular, and for nothing at all. Beckett's anti-heroes were my role models, and in time I came to discover the hidden wisdom in those most poetic of modern texts — the wisdom that looks death in the face and exchanges a corny joke with it.

It was during my first year at university that I discovered *Philosophical Investigations*. Heart and brain were oppressed by the donnish prose of academic philosophy and Wittgenstein came as a bolt from the blue

prose which deals with abstract questions, but so abundant

with irony and imagery and so animated by thought that I was cured at once of the doubts that threatened to abort my philosophical career. Moreover, I found in this work arguments which radically altered my vision of reality, in particular the subtle discussion of the self and its grammar which finally lifted philosophy clear (for me as for many others) from the cesspit of phenomenology. Repeated readings have convinced me that this work is the greatest work of philosophy since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the treachery to the pseudo-science is everywhere undermining thought and wisdom.

There is one other thing that all the three books I have chosen have in common: they are all dead-acknowledging, and therefore life-affirming. Most books published now are, by contrast, death-tearing and therefore life-negating.

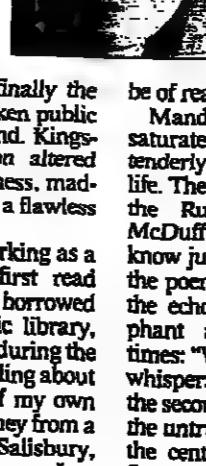
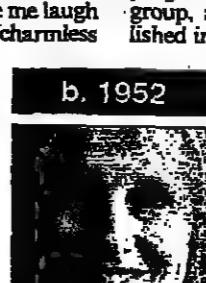
## Helen Dunmore became intoxicated by the rowdy humour of Kingsley Amis

I was a year old when *Lucky Jim* was published, in an England of landladies, cars with starting-handles, guileless smoking, ex-servicemen and Bakelite mugs. I can't remember when I first read it — too early, probably, to get all the jokes. But I loved them as I do now. It has always made me laugh out loud. Here is the charm of Margaret in a rictus of self-abandon: "She drained her glass with a quick, gay movement. 'Beer,' she said. 'Buy me beer. The night is young.' There is Jim's nightmare weekend, with the Welches, their denunciation of Bertrand Welch as 'You bloody old tower-faced boot-faced totem pole on a crap reservation', and finally the tour-de-force of his drunken public lecture on Merrie England. Kingsley Amis is brilliant on altered states of mind: drunkenness, madness, frenzy. *Lucky Jim* is a flawless comic novel.

When I was 21 and working as a teacher in Finland, I first read Doris Lessing's novels. I borrowed them from Turku public library, and would lie on my bed during the long dark afternoons reading about Martha Quest's life as if my own depended on it. Her journey from a remote African farm to Salisbury, then on to London, mirrors Lessing's own life. Doris Lessing changes her readers: you cannot think in quite the same way once you have experienced that sensory power and intelligence.

Ossip Mandelstam was a Russian poet who died during the Stalinist purges. He was one of the Acmeist group, and his work wasn't published in English until many years after his death. His wife, Nadezhda, married it, or it would have been lost entirely. His poetry has influenced me deeply since 1974, when I bought his *Selected Poems*, translated by David McDuff. Too deep, perhaps. But slowly, the excess of influence sifts away, leaving only the residue which will be of real benefit to a young poet.

Mandelstam is a great poet, saturated in classical culture yet tenderly responsive to everyday life. The Rivers Press edition offers the Russian text as well as McDuff's translations, although I know just enough Russian to read the poems aloud. Above all I hear the echo of Mandelstam's triumphant affirmation in appealing times: "With my bloodless mouth I whisper: I was born in the night of the second and third of January in the untrustworthy year of '91, and the centuries surround me with fire."



JPJ 10/10/97

## TIMES WRITERS MAKE A PERSONAL CHOICE

**Kenneth Baker** ventured beyond Burke and then waited for Godot

**M**ost of my political beliefs were fashioned by books written before 1934, principally the writings of Edmund Burke. Any child of my generation could not but help be inspired by the rumbling rhetoric of Churchill, which evoked patriotism, sacrifice and pride in our history. But of all the books on conservatism in the past 50 years, the one which made the most appeal to my sort of conservatism is Michael Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (1962).

The reason why the Conservative Party has survived is that deep in our nation there is a conservative disposition which reveals itself in certain conservative attitudes. Oakeshott writes: "The disposition to be conservative is then warm and positive in respect of enjoyment and correspondingly cool and critical in respect of change and innovation... What others plausibly identify as timidity he recognises himself as rational prudence. What others interpret as inactivity, he recognises as a disposition to enjoy, rather than exploit."

The second book is *Four Quarters* (1944) by T. S. Eliot. In these four poems, Eliot writes of the importance of custom and convention, of the significance of regularity and of a respect for history. All of

these aspects of human life are, at least for the moment, unfashionable. Yet they are the very things that make the human condition bearable and they are the essential buttresses of a civilised society. It has been for me a consolation and a reaffirmation of faith to be reminded that the past, present and future are but part of a great continuum:

"The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree/ Are of equal duration. A people without history/ Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern/ Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails/ On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel/ History is now and England."

My third book is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). When I saw the first production of this play at the Criterion Theatre in the Fifties I was completely mesmerised. I was lucky in that I had been taken regularly by my parents to the Richmond Rep where we had seen plays by writers such as Pinero, Priestley, Maugham, Rattigan and occasionally Shaw. *Godot* was utterly different: two tramps waiting for something, for someone, and meeting a great, bullying figure. The play awakened me in an awareness of the greater complexity of human desire, ambition and purpose.

**Ian McIntyre** confesses his admiration for the 18th-century London of Boswell

**T**he striking title of D. R. Davies's study of the General Confession, *Down Peacock's Feathers* (1942), comes from an old homily called *The Misery of Man* — "Therefore, good people, let us beware of such hypocrisy, vain-glory, and justifying of ourselves; let us look upon our feet; and then down peacock's feathers, down proud heart, down vile clay, frail and brittle vessels." The book appeared during the war. Davies wrote it because he discovered that nobody else had ever thought of doing so. "I am all the more clouting the secularised mind — hard," he wrote in his preface. "The General Confession is a magnificent hedge-hammer!" I read it when I was a schoolboy and it provided me with many important references that have stayed with me.

The second book lodged in my mind from those formative years was by an opposition backbencher, Quintin Hogg, and his book was called *The Case for Conservatism*. It was published at the tail end of 1947, little more than two years after his party had suffered a crushing defeat.

Hogg sets out basic Conservative principles and ideas, and examines the case of his Labour and Liberal opponents. He does so robustly and entertainingly. He shows no inci-

nation to snuggle up to any other party for short-term advantage. He reflects, in a cheerful, Ken Clarkeish sort of way that no government, however good, remains popular indefinitely. "An exultant majority enthusiastically proclaims a new era to a delighted electorate... War, poverty, ugliness, squalor, disease, bad weather will vanish in the midst..." Fifty years on, in all sorts of ways, it remains a tremendously good read.

My third seminal book is Boswell's *London 1762-1763* (1950). It appeared during my first year at Cambridge. Nobody with a professional interest in the 18th century can get very far without the help of American academic scholarship — W. S. Lewis's magisterial edition of the correspondence of Horace Walpole, J. L. Clifford's *Young Samuel Johnson*, for example.

But for sheer pleasure and refreshment I go back to the *Journal*. It stands, as its editor Frederick Pottle puts it in his wise and penetrating introduction, "between the poles of Pepys and Rousseau." It is neither autobiography nor apology. Boswell more than once said he was writing a history of his own mind. In doing so he produced one of the comic masterpieces of our literature.

**A. S. Byatt** was awoken by the resonant voice of Wallace Stevens

**M**y three books, it turns out, are all to do with the problem that has obsessed me since I began to think — why make works of art at all? Literature is what I most care about, but I had a socially responsible upbringing, and have, for a resolute agnostic, a religious temperament. So I was never quite sure what literature ought to matter as much as it did (and does) to me.

My first choice was in fact only published as a book in 1997. It is *Essentialists and Myths*, Iris Murdoch's collected writings on philosophy and literature. These essays over the years have given me all sorts of new ways of thinking about art, morals, politics, Freud and Marx. Her essay *Against Dryness* in 1961 was a wise analysis of the forms of the 20th-century novel, and their relation to the forms of our political life and thought.

Her essays on "goodness" combine psychological understanding, moral ambition, and eloquent prose. I continue to learn from her. She is a wonderful antidote to easy pessimism.

My second choice, rather to my surprise, turned out to be Lionel Trilling's *Beyond Culture*, first published in 1966. What I first gained from this book was a way of thinking about what "culture" was, a way which was subtle and not stifling. Trilling has a passionately ironic detachment from movements of thought which he diagnoses sympathetically and sharply. This collection of essays deals with the institutionalisation of rebellion, the creation of an orthodoxy of "subversion", the movement into the political structures of universities of forms of "modern" criticisms of "society" which change the nature by becoming accepted beliefs. He is interested in the way in which we increasingly value the group before the individual. In his

essay, *Freud: Within and Beyond Culture*, he writes of Freud's emphasis on a biological residue of human quality which is resistant to cultural control. Like him, I find this idea liberating. We have lived through a time of ideological absolutes and he has proved a wryly accurate and benign prophet.

My last choice had to be the thing itself, the work of art in words, and it was easy to choose the *Collected Poems* of Wallace Stevens (1955). Discovering Stevens at the end of the Sixties, as a woman, was like first hearing the complicated rhythms of Shakespeare and Milton as a girl. Stevens, as a poet, has as a partner, the perfect arrangement of the elements of his medium into new, and surprising, and inevitable forms. I heard him before I read him, on a record, through a half-open door, intoning *The Idea of Order at Key West* which embodies our "rage for order" in light and sound and elemental water, primitive, passionate and intellectual. I go back and back to *Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction*, which combines weather with the gods, analysis with play, and scatters new-minded bright images across every page with inexhaustible largesse. All of us perhaps, have one or two phrases which we repeat to ourselves in time of difficulty, and one of mine is from *Notes*: "To discover an order as of a season, to discover summer and know it well, to find, not to impose, not to have reasoned at all." Out of nothing to have come on major weather! It is possible, possible, possible. It must be! Possible!

I think what all my three books have in common, also, is the patience to attempt to find, not to impose, the elegant scepticism, the fierce questioning, which is the antidote to ideology. Furthermore, I



Traveller who inspired Calvino — and Winterson: Marco Polo, from the first printed edition of his journey

**Jeanette Winterson** loved Calvino's Venice



described: Venice. As unlived pasts and beckoning futures become equally real, or equally unreal, the only possibility is invention.

I read *The Diaries of Virginia Woolf* (five volumes, 1915-41; published by the Hogarth Press 1977-94) one by one as they appeared. To me they were talismanic. I was 17 when Volume One was published and saving up to go to Oxford. Woolf's work, and bit by bit her life, were an affirmation of all I felt to be valuable. Valuable and fragile, for it is so easy to question to

death the importance of art and culture in our society. Is it for everyone? Is it elitist? Who should pay? These are uniquely 20th-century questions and ones which Woolf tried to answer, had to answer, because for her, art and life were written together on the same page. In these diaries there is detachment, analysis, objectivity, wit, but the fluid that fills the pen is the stuff of life itself.

As a teenager, and now 20 years later, this hauling together of life's elements — the ride on the top of a bus, the seat in the stalls at the opera, a book to read, a holiday, a dog barking, Dame by the fire, and pain, and loss, and fear and death

— seems to me to be a true rendering of the account. Art is made out of human passions, emotions, energies and cannot be separated from them, any more than human life can live a single day without telling itself a story.

Art, when it happens, challenges the "I" that we are. The poems in *The Thing in the Gap Stone Still* by Alice Oswald (1996) are not confrontational, angry, political: their shock is in the renewal of image and language that puts our everyday clichés and dullness to shame. I bought 20 copies.

**Lisa Jardine**, cyberfeminist, mourns the manual to her Apple Mac

**B**ooks have been a crucial influence in my life since childhood — one of my earliest memories is of going alone to Boots with a precious book token and picking out the biggest book I could find, working on the principle that I wanted the maximum number of words possible for my money. It is really hard to narrow those which have affected me down to a mere three.

I was still reading mathematics at Cambridge when a friend reading English gave me Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961). From Williams I learnt that the creative mind had a special part to play in shaping contemporary society. I discovered from him why art and literature were of critical importance for someone with burning left-wing political principles.

*The Long Revolution* was probably responsible for my switching from science to humanities a year later, certainly a turning point in my life. Some years later, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, published in 1981, persuaded me that the novel at its greatest is still an important force for understanding and change in the world. The mad, bad and funny adventures of Rushdie's hero Saleem, born with India's independence at midnight on August 15, 1947, are an allegory

for India's own progress to maturity. The novel also showed me that the English novel had given way to the world novel in English.

My last life-changing book has in be both much more banal and yet in the end more far-reaching in its impact on my life. It is the Apple Macintosh user manual which introduced me to my first Mac somewhere around 1985.

The manual is long lost, but the access it gave me to the world of new technology permanently transformed my working life. I can't even remember writing *longhand*: composing on a typewriter is a dim, distant memory. My old Selectric typewriter (itself a piece of new technology in its day) turned up in our loft when we were clearing it out last weekend. My son thought it was a valuable antique, but I only got that in the Seventies.

Since a lost manual can hardly be considered a personal landmark, I substitute for it Sudie Plant's *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technology* (1997). I laughed all the way through her mischievous account of women to cyberculture. She describes my own love affair with new technology beautifully. Let's all be cyberfeminists as we approach the millennium.

**Peter Stothard** sneaks under the wire with Dodds's irrational Greeks

**W**hen the rules of this Christmas game were first formulated, I felt confident of at least one choice. Eduard Fraenkel's three-volume text and commentary on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, the quintessential work of modern classical scholarship by the finest scholar I have ever been privileged to hear.

Some of my allotted words would have been used to defend his art of line-by-line analysis against trendy recent theories that such enterprises are small-minded, "atomatic" and damaging to overall comprehension of the texts. Sadly, it turned out that Fraenkel's *Agamemnon* was published in 1950, a few months before my date of birth.

My second choice, *The Greeks and the Irrational* by E. R. Dodds, was almost barred for the same reason. Dodds too wrote brilliant commentaries but he also liberated a lifetime of classical students from the view that every Ancient Greek was a logical little Aristotle at heart.

Art, when it happens, challenges the "I" that we are. The poems in *The Thing in the Gap Stone Still* by Alice Oswald (1996) are not confrontational, angry, political: their shock is in the renewal of image and language that puts our everyday clichés and dullness to shame. I bought 20 copies.

Dodds was a close friend of W. H. Auden, from whose work I would certainly have chosen if his best poems had not been from the years before 1951. The closest to a disciple of Auden today is James Fenton. My second book is his collection, *The Memory of War*, first published in 1982, which includes *A German Requiem*, *Dead Soldiers* and *The Skip*, all of which are poems that both power themselves into the general canon and spark intense personal recollections of subjects, spaces and years.

*Safely Inside my life* came Michael Oakeshott's *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, published in 1962, which spawned decades of doubts about whether any government minister who promised to improve condition X by action Y knew even what he was endeavouring to do, let alone how to do it. We are now in that part of the political cycle when rational progress is back in fashion. Labour leaders are daily strapping logic more tightly to their clipboards. It must be time to read Oakeshott again.

Christmas can be murder.



If you have a clue what to give here's the answer.

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## Leader entitled to sue his own council

Regina v Bassettaw District Council, Ex parte Oxby

Before Lord Justice Hobhouse, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Orton  
[Judgment December 11]

Where the grant of planning permission was tainted by actual or apparent bias on the part of the councillors involved in the decision-making process, it was legitimate for the council, through its leader, to bring judicial review proceedings to have those planning decisions declared illegal and void, instead of revoking the decisions under section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, thereby avoiding the need for compensation under section 107 of the Act.

The Court of Appeal so stated allowing an appeal by the applicant, Graham Anthony Nicholas Oxby, from the dismissal by Mr Justice Popplewell on December 11, 1996 of his application for judicial review of two planning decisions of Bassettaw District Council dated February 21, 1994 and October 14, 1994, respectively.

On the appeal, the respondents were the interested third parties, Clarence and Frank, Mabs Howcroft, who had been granted planning permission to develop for domestic housing two plots of agricultural land at Grange Farm, Ellerton, Rood, Bedford, Northamptonshire, owned by them.

The applicant was applying as the leader of the council and the chairman of its policy and resources committee which resolved to fund the application and not oppose it.

Mr David Mole, QC and Mr Paul Brown for the applicant; Mr Alan Alsobury for the Howcrofts.

LORD JUSTICE HOBHOUSE said that central to the matter was the question whether the Howcrofts should be paid compensation of about £2 million for the revocation of the planning consents under sections 97 and 100 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

If the council, through the applicant, succeeded in obtaining a declaration that the planning consents were void, the council would not have to invoke section 97 and would not have to pay compensation under section 107.

In 1992 the Howcrofts made a joint venture agreement with Mr Frank Coney which made him

their agent for the purpose of applying for and, if possible, obtaining the requisite planning consents for the residential development of Grange Farm. They gave him a substantial financial interest in the grant of those planning consents. A plan was attached showing the boundaries of the land which was divided into three plots: "Parrymore 1", "Parrymore 2" and "Southfields".

When the substantive application came before Mr Justice Popplewell the Howcrofts case was considered by the council's planning sub-committee with Councillor W. D. Hare in the chair and since the officers' recommendation that the application should be refused, the sub-committee refused to grant consent.

On October 11, 1993 the decision was issued. The land was sold to a developer with the benefit of a planning consent for a substantial sum of money. The net proceeds were divided 75 per cent to the Howcrofts and 25 per cent to Mr Coney. Houses had since been built on the land.

On February 9, 1994 the application in respect of Parrymore 1 was considered by the sub-committee with Councillor Hare in the chair and against the officers' recommendation of the sub-committee. The decision notice granting the consent was issued on February 24, 1994. The Parrymore 2 land had not been sold by the Howcrofts and remained undeveloped.

In May 1994 Councillor Hare ceased to be a member of the council and Councillor G. A. Crossland took over as chairman of the planning sub-committee. On September 21 the Southfields application was considered with Councillor Crossland in the chair and, against the advice of the officers, it was resolved to grant consent. The decision notice granting the consent was issued on October 14, 1994. The Southfields land had not been sold and remained undeveloped.

He considered that revocation of the consents under section 97 gave the council an adequate remedy. He also found that there had been undue delay. He accordingly refused relief.

## Subject interest

Section 31 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 provided: "[3] No application for judicial review shall be made unless... the applicant has a sufficient interest in the matter to which the application relates." What amounted to a "sufficient interest" had been widely interpreted in recognition of the character and purpose of the procedure for obtaining judicial review.

## Alternative remedies

The relevant feature of the power of revocation was that it might take into account circumstances arising since the original grant of consent.

The power of the local planning authority was granted in terms which were widely expressed. But it should only exercise the power to revoke under section 97 if it considered it expedient to exercise that power which carried with it a right to a person interested in the land to apply for compensation under section 107.

The council did not consider it expedient to revoke those consents because they were tainted by either actual or apparent bias and should be declared void without the payment of compensation.

Indeed, it submitted that it would be wrong and a dereliction of the duty of the council not to seek to have those consents set aside but to choose to revoke them and pay compensation. In his Lordship's

judgment that was a legitimate and proper attitude for the council to adopt.

## Delay, the legal framework

It was on the direction of the council that the applicant was bringing the proceedings. It was the decision of the council that the applicant sought to have declared void.

It was possible to justify the making of the application by the applicant as an elector of, and council taxpayer to the council. In the context of local government such a basis for establishing a sufficient interest had been recognised. However, such a justification would be artificial in the present case.

More germane was what was said by Mr Justice Nolan in *R v Port Talbot Borough Council, Ex parte Jones* ([1988] 2 All ER 207, 215). That case was present case, concerning an allegedly unlawful contract by a local authority.

Mr Justice Nolan had commented: "(The application) was made by the leader of the council, the view being correctly taken that the council itself could hardly be both applicant and respondent. Counsel for [the third respondent] accepts, again correctly in my view, that the leader of the council has the necessary locus standi."

In his Lordship's judgment, that represented an acceptable approach. It was a convenient and appropriate course to adopt provided, of course, it was not abused.

Such a role of the applicant was sufficient to meet the requirements of the statute and the rules at the stage of application for leave. At the stage of the decision whether or not to grant the remedy asked on the substantive application for judicial review, the nature of the application and the nature of the factors which could, and should in such case as the present, be taken into account in deciding whether to grant the remedy sought.

When exercising the discretion whether or not to grant the remedy, the court had to take into account that in substance, although not in form, it was the council itself that was seeking to have decisions of its own, through one of its own committees, declared void.

The questions of delay, alternative remedies and prejudice to interested third parties and the ultimate exercise of the discretion had to all be assessed with that factor in mind.

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## SAILING

# Cayard in front by a nose as fleet nears turn

By EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

IT IS not often that a professional yacht racing skipper refers to his boat as a horse, but then Paul Cayard, at the wheel of *EF Language*, has never failed to impress with his imaginative and lucid interpretation of situations during his first Whitbread Round The World Race.

The Californian was in good spirits yesterday as *EF Language* again popped out at the head of the nine-boat fleet on the difficult third leg from Fremantle to Sydney, one characterised by windward sailing and weather maps dominated by high pressure.

"We are into miles-at-the-barn mode," Cayard, who was enjoying a 12-mile lead over Gunnar Kranz, in *Swedish Match*, in second place, said. "This horse can smell the barn and it's hoofin' as fast as it can."

*EF Language* was making ten knots in 14 knots of breeze from the south and heading straight for Cape Orway at the western entrance to the Bass Strait, 600 miles ahead.

Cayard and Kranz have benefited from steering a middle-of-the-fleet course during the past two days. The field is still spread out over a north-south axis of 175 miles.

Laurie Smith, on *Silk Cut*, is furthest north, with *Chessie*

in third place, 100 miles behind.

"We have decided to travel over the top of the high pressure that is pushing into the Bight, on the basis that the south should eventually run out of wind and the only wind in town will be in the north."

The question mark at the end of that sentence in Dalton's e-mail communication was his own, perhaps an indication of just how anxious the Auckland and Mike Quilter, the navigator, must be feeling, knowing that their decisions could determine whether *Merit Cup* will still be in the running for overall honours at the end of this leg.

While working as a co-ordinator for the Action Sport

project in Featherstone in 1988, Sheldon had no shortage of volunteers wanting to try the sport. "I can remember that first session. It was bitterly cold, the first Friday night after Christmas. We weren't allowed on the pitch, in case we churned it up too much, so we just ran around on the side. But we had 19 women turn up and from that we formed two teams, Redhill and Wakefield Panthers."

Featherstone, Sheldon's home town, is in the heartland of rugby league. Her two brothers are similarly passionate about the game and she remembers the girls playing at her school. "I can recall when Featherstone got to Wembley and what it felt like for the town," she said. "It's very much a traditional stronghold and, when the team went round in their bus

Rugby league, perhaps the most masculine of sports, is undergoing another facelift. No sooner has the Super League substituted winter mud for summer razzmatazz than Jackie Sheldon is spreading the news that women can play too.

The British Amateur Rugby League Association (Barla) agrees and has appointed Sheldon, 35, as the first women's national development officer. This new post, funded by the Sports Council, will run for 12 months. "The job has a wide remit," Sheldon said. "I want to get a proper structure in place for women to play, coach and run their own game."

That women play at all may come as a surprise to anyone living south of the Pennines.

According to Sheldon, there are about 500 women playing rugby league, all in the north of England at present. The Women's Rugby League Association was formed in 1986 and there are two divisions in its national league. A Great Britain squad was first assembled in 1995. Sheldon herself played up until this year and is now the most qualified coach in the women's game.

She hopes that the interest generated by teams such as the London Broncos will help to shift the appeal of the game southwards. There was a women's club in Fulham during the late Eighties. "They were often short of players and used to travel hundreds of miles in their van every week to play," Sheldon said. "I remember hearing that they picked up a hitch-hiker once, on condition that she played in the game!"

While working as a co-ordinator for the Action Sport

after being at Wembley, every one came out to cheer."

She regrets that, in the new-look men's game, some of the smaller clubs, such as Featherstone Rovers, are getting weaker while the big ones, such as Bradford Bulls, are getting stronger. "You can't make the same assumptions any more," she said. "The clubs need to put something back into the local community and the ones that are doing that are reaping the benefit."

Wakefield Panthers are the dominant force in the women's game. Unbeaten in seven years, they have a growing reputation and support. Sheldon, who bears a striking resemblance to the singer, Debbie Harry, of Blondie, does not look big enough or mean enough to have played as a second-row forward. She

is certain, though, that women have more than enough skill and power to play an entertaining game.

The Australians seem to agree. In August 1996, after British players had raised the necessary £70,000, Sheldon and her team-mates went on a tour that included three internationals and took in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane.

Barla has now signalled its support and Sheldon believes it is time to make the sport more visible. "What I'd really like is for the women to play at Wembley. A few years ago, we played before the Premiership final in front of thousands."

The GB women were invited to Wembley for the Challenge Cup final this year, but we were only allowed to dance round the pitch waving flags. It was nice to be at Wembley, but we should have been playing. I hope that day is not too far away."



Cayard: in good spirits

Latest positions, page 45

## SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

The suit combination in which there is most scope for delicate play is where the declarer has nine cards missing just the queen. Here is another variation on the theme.

Dealer East N-S game and 60 Rubber bridge

♦♦♦♦	♦♦♦♦
♦A K J 3	♦A Q
♦K 9 7 4	♦K 8 7 6
♦8	♦A 7 6 5
♦Q 8 4	♦7 5
♦K 10 9 8 5 3	♦J 8 7
♦Q 6 5	♦A 10 8 6 3
♦K 10 9 8 5 2	♦K 10 9 8 5 2
♦Q 6 5	♦Q 6 5
♦A 2	♦A 2
♦2	♦2

Contract: Four Spades doubled, by South. Lead: Ten of diamonds

After two passes, West opened Three Diamonds, North doubled and East bid Four Diamonds. That went back to East, who doubled. I had just lost successively a 22-point and a 32-point rubber in the TGR £100 game, and I threw away another £1,000 on this hand. The queen of diamonds held the first trick and I played a spade to the king. Now how should I continue?

East was Robert Richman, who played for Australia in the recent Bermuda Bowl. Obviously, if I continued with another high spade, he would duck; was there any better play than continuing trumps?

In practice, I did play a second high trump, ducked again by East. He took the third round and returned a diamond. Now I was stuck in dummy, and to avoid losing control had to play a ace and king of hearts; when East ruffed the second round, I was one off.

There is a clear safety play on this hand. After one round

of trumps, I should have played a heart to the king. Now I play second spade. East's best play is to duck (else I have communication to draw trumps before tackling the hearts), and now I play a second heart, finessing the jack when West follows small.

The beauty of this play is that, whether East ruffs or wins with the queen, hearts are set up.

The difference from my line of play is that I lose only one heart trick (obviously West cannot have the ace of clubs after East's double, so there is no danger of losing two heart ruffs). Playing as I did at the table, I managed to lose both a ruff and a heart trick. Annoying — I wrote about this type of play a few months ago.

□ The Macmillan International Bridge Pairs Championship 1998 will be played at The White House Hotel, Albany Street, London NW1 from Wednesday January 21 to Friday January 23. Tickets and information are available from the Macmillan Box Office, 31 Queens Road, Mortlake, London SW14 8PH. Tel: 0181-878 5844.

## KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Favourite's progress

Viswanathan Anand, the Indian grandmaster, is the highest rated player in the Fide championship. His rating of 2765 exceeds even that of Anatoly Karpov (2745) who has already qualified for the final. So far, during his campaign to dethrone Karpov, Anand has eliminated both Predrag Nikolic and Alexander Khalifman.

White: Viswanathan Anand

Black: Predrag Nikolic

Fide world championship

Groningen, December 1997

Bogo-Indian Defence

1 e4 e5

2 Nf3 Nc6

3 c4 Bb4+

4 Nbd2 0-0

5 Bg5 Bb7

6 Bxd2 b6

7 Bg5 Bb7

8 e3 d6

9 Bd3 h6

10 0-0 d5

11 Bh4 c5

12 Bg3 d6

13 cxd5 bxc5

14 dxc5 Nc6

15 d4 Nc4

16 Rf1 Nc6

17 h4 Bb3

18 Bf5 Nf6

19 Qd4 Nf6

20 Rf1 Nf6

21 Bb1 Bg4

22 e4 Bg4

23 Qd6 Bg4

24 e5 Bg4

25 Rf3 Rf3

26 Rf3 Rf3

27 h4 Bg4

28 e4 Bg4

29 Rf3 Bg4

30 Rf3 Bg4

31 Rf3 Bg4

32 Rf3 Bg4

33 Rf3 Bg4

34 Rf3 Bg4

35 Rf3 Bg4

White resigns

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

HYGRIC  
a. A mythical beast  
b. To do with water  
c. A lost language

MANDAT  
a. Revolutionary money  
b. The Jersey Parliament  
c. "Let Justice be Done!"

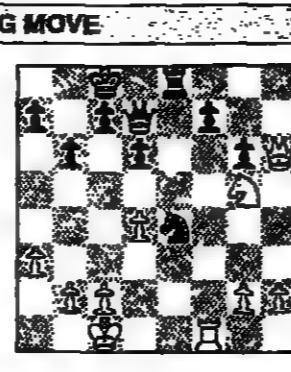
Answers on page 45

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

Black to play. This position is from Mortensen — Krasenkow, Hastings, 1992. Material is level, but Black has the better chances as his pieces are more centralised. He now found a way to exploit the disjointed nature of the white forces. What did he play?

Solution on page 45



## Women thrive in league of their own

JUSTIN SLEEE/GUZELIAN

**SQUASH**  
Marshall ready for life at the top

By COLIN MCQUILLAN

PETER MARSHALL'S defeat of Simon Parke in the NSL Cup first-round game at Edgbaston Priory late on Monday evening is certain to return the double-hander to the position of England No 1. It would be the first time that Marshall, 26, has led the national rankings since he was forced out of the game with chronic fatigue syndrome in April, 1995.

The former world No 2 defeated Parke, 25, the first-string for ICL LionHerts, the Super League champions, 10-8, 9-4, 10-8 in an hour-long encounter. For a time, the victory seemed to offer Armchair Priory, Marshall's National Squash League side, a chance of reaching the quarter-finals of the cup — which is played annually between the two leading leagues in Great Britain — but lower-order victories by Mark Chaloner, who beat Clive Leach 8-10, 9-7, 9-7, and Julian Wellings, who defeated Simon Taylor 4-9, 5-9, 9-7, 9-5, 9-7, ensured that LionHerts went through.

Tamworth Duffield, also of the National League, beat Rowlands Manchester, of the Super League, the team that swept all before them in the cup last season, 2-1 on their village courts in Derbyshire. Nick Taylor won at first string for the cup-holders, but Paul Hargrave and John Russell carried the lower order for Duffield.

Halifax Insurance, who are expected to introduce Jansher Khan, of Pakistan, into Super League action from January, defeated Hallamshire 2-1, while Surbiton carried the day for the Super League 3-0 against Bishop's Stortford and Ellis Lingfield defeated Hartpury Chichester 2-1.

In Wales, Dunraven Magsteg beat Cardiff Institute 3-0. In a comprehensive display of developing Welsh strength in squash, Alex Gough, defeated Matthew Benjamin 9-3, 9-7, 7-9, 9-4, David Evans, the Welsh champion, overcame Greg Tippings 9-6, 9-6, 9-4 and Adrian Davies, the former Wales captain, defeated Paul Allen 9-7, 10-8, 2-9, 9-4.

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JP

## RACING

# Board needs more realistic approach for financial plan

By RICHARD EVANS, RACING CORRESPONDENT

AS 1998 beckons, those running the British Horseracing Board (BHB) should consider making an early New Year's resolution — to confront reality. Otherwise, they are in danger of making a laughing stock of themselves and the sport in their care.

*The Times* yesterday reproduced the salient points of a financial plan for British racing under consideration by the BHB. Inside the next month, Lord Wakeham and his colleagues are due to complete and go public with what amounts to a blueprint for the sport in the 21st Century. Producing a well-reasoned document with compelling arguments and financially sound recommendations will be critical for the sport's future.

The plan's analysis of the industry's financial problems and the effect on British racing is concise and admirably explained; albeit without saying anything dramatically new. Even the chapter on the sport's financial requirements is well meaning, if a shade optimistic. For example, would an extra £12 million spent on marketing racing really increase employment by 2,280, boost income by £25 million and tax revenues by £5.5 million as well as attracting 550 extra owners and horses?

However, the real problem comes when the plan moves on to how the extra £105 million deemed necessary to fulfil racing's financial needs should be raised. Peter Savill and his team argue that Government should cut be-

ting duty by 1.75 per cent with the resulting £117 million being switched to the levy.

Racing should get £80 million with greyhound racing receiving £17 million. This would leave the betting industry with a surplus of about £20 million.

Does the BHB honestly believe the Government is just going to give £20 million to the big bookmakers, all of whom have recently achieved record profits, rather than keep the money for the NHS or schools? If so, it is living in cloud cuckoo land.

It gets worse. Detailing the

## RICHARD EVANS

Nap: Bracey Run (2.40 Towcester)  
Or: Hurling debut at Sandown 13 days ago, Bracey Run made eye-catching head-to-head finish third behind Country Beau in one of hottest novice races of the season. He has Baffet High beet.

Next best: Fen Terrier (1.30 Cambridges)

impact of using the extra cash to double prize-money and boost marketing, the plan relies on a study carried out by KPMG management consultants. That study appears to have been based on interviews with a group of just 54 owners — including a larger proportion of big owners — with the results fed into a financial model.

The outcome is the claim that racing's income would be boosted by £188 million (excluding any revenue from increased betting) and 9,300

jobs would be created — 1,720 in training yards, 415 in livery yards, 3,125 in studs and bloodstock auctioneers, 900 at racecourses and 2,100 with vets, farriers, feed and forage merchants and caterers. There would also be 2,495 new owners and 3,417 new horses.

Betting turnover would be increased by £500 million and swell bookmakers' profits by a further £65 million.

If that does not defy belief, the BHB plan claims it will not cost the Government a penny or, in its language, increased tax revenue and savings resulting from less unemployment will make it likely that a betting duty cut of 1.75 per cent by Government would be at least revenue neutral.

I wish it were true. But I don't think it is and neither will the Treasury. Indeed, the sense of disbelief produced within Whitehall by racing's claims and demands grows by the day.

The sense of unease is shared, privately, by some BHB members, notably David Oldrey. He has told colleagues that to demand a transfer of 1.75 per cent betting duty to levy is "impulsive" and potentially damaging to racing's cause. He is right. Indeed, there is a fear the Government will be tempted to increase rather than decrease betting duty in the next Budget.

Racing's funding is unsatisfactory — but the financial plan is, at best, politically naive and, at worst, threatens any chance of achieving improvement.

TONY McCLOY raced to the fastest 150 winners in a jumping season on Deano's Beau at Bangor yesterday, before completing a double on Jymjam Johnny in the Boudoir Stud Handicap Chase.

Never in any danger of defeat, the long odds-on Deano's Beau, trained by Martin Pipe, made every yard of the running and cruised home four lengths clear of Buckhouse Boy.

Pipe has been responsible for 93 of McCoy's 150 winners and the Jockey, after being presented with a bottle of champagne in the winner's enclosure to mark his feat, said: "Having the Pipe horses to ride is a big help. They make my job a lot easier. I would like to thank Mr Pipe

and also my agent, David Roberts, for doing such a great job on my behalf."

The Irish rider, with an unassassable lead in the jockeys' championship, said: "I have had a bit of flu recently and haven't felt that great, but it hasn't been bad enough for me to take any time off."

Asked whether he would be chasing Peter Scudamore's 1988 record total of 221 winners in a season, McCoy said: "There is a long way to go. If I am still in one piece after Cheltenham then we shall."

Tullymurry Toff, the highly promising novice chaser trained by Malcolm Jefferson, has cracked a bone in his knee and is out for the season. He is expected to make a full recovery.

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McCoy clears the last on Deano's Beau at Bangor yesterday on his way to the fastest 150 winners in a season

## Prospects look good for Ascot

ASCOT, due to stage the Smurfit Long Walk Hurdle and the Beterware Cup on Saturday, is confident of racing going ahead.

Nick Cheyne, the clerk of the course, said yesterday: "We are getting some steady snow, but it is expected to turn to drizzle followed by heavier rain. Whatever happens today, the temperatures are set to rise from tomorrow so we should be in the clear."

Kempton expects give in the ground for the Pertemps Christmas Festival. Peter McNeile, the clerk of the course, said: "The going is good and soft at present and I would expect good or good to soft ground on Boxing Day."

Heavy overnight snow caused the cancellation of yesterday's meeting at Kempton.

## TOWCESTER

## THUNDERER

12.40 My Man in Dundalk (2.10) (M) 1st 11-12  
1.10 Dantes Cavalier  
1.40 Ever Smile

Timekeeper's top rating: 1.10 BANK AVENUE.

GOING: SOFT

## TOTE JACKPOT MEETING

## GUIDE TO OUR ON-LINE RACECARD

101 11344 GOOD TIMES 13 (F.G.0.8) (M) (2nd) D Redvers 8 Hall 12-0 ... B West (7) 88  
Record number. Six-figure odds (7-1) ... best. B brought home his last win (2-0) ... first to lead. S - stepped up R - relaxed. D - downed. C - closed. H - home. V - year. H - heat. E - eyeball. G - course winner. D - distance winner. (2) - course and distance. Timesetter's speed rating.

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TONY McCLOY reached 150 in record time at Bangor yesterday on his way to the fastest 150 winners in a season

12.40 NORTHANTS 00 TURKEY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (E, 97.95; 20; 13 runners)

101 229-124 NORMAN 13 (F.G.0.8) (M) (2nd) P Dwyer 7-12-0 ... A McCoy 104  
102 171-250 MY MAN IN DUNDALK 17 (M) (3rd) S Cullen 9 Carley 8-11-0 ... H Hogan 84  
103 198-200 MINSTER'S MADAM 27 (G) (5th) J Neale 11-11-0 ... T Descomps 84  
104 200-202 MONSTER'S MADAM 27 (G) (5th) J Neale 11-11-0 ... G Llewellyn 84  
105 163-183 NORMAN 13 (F.G.0.8) (M) (2nd) P Dwyer 7-12-0 ... H Hogan 84  
106 184-192 NORMAN 13 (F.G.0.8) (M) (2nd) P Dwyer 7-12-0 ... H Hogan 84  
107 242-252 LANCER 10 (F) (A) H Aspin 8-11-0 ... R Lyons 84  
108 242-2445 MARE 600 13 (F) (2nd) H Shapland 7-12-0 ... R Lyons 84  
109 242-245 MARE 600 13 (F) (2nd) H Shapland 7-12-0 ... R Lyons 84  
110 402-404 LAMSON 22 (G) (5th) J Neale 7-10-0 ... H Hogan 84  
111 200-205 CEDRIC 31 (G) (5th) J Neale 7-10-0 ... H Hogan 84  
112 199-200 CEDRIC 31 (G) (5th) J Neale 7-10-0 ... H Hogan 84  
113 10-200 NORMAN'S BABY 27 (G) (5th) P Dwyer 7-10-0 ... H Hogan 84  
114 242-243 NORMAN'S BABY 27 (G) (5th) P Dwyer 7-10-0 ... H Hogan 84  
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17

## FOOTBALL

# Northampton earn lucrative derby from cup victory

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

IAN ATKINS, the manager of Northampton Town, was able to look forward to an FA Cup third-round game against Leicester City yesterday after his side survived a penalty shoot-out at Basingstoke Town in a hard-fought second-round replay on Tuesday night.

The Ryman League hosts held the Nationwide League second division side to 0-0 after 120 minutes, but then missed twice from the penalty spot.

"Leicester in the next round is great for the players, but also financially for the club — it's a terrific draw," Atkins said.

Carl Heege scored the winning penalty in the 4-3 shoot-out, but said: "Full credit to Basingstoke. They were terrible conditions, but we stuck to our task and thankfully we came through." Ernie Howe, the Basingstoke manager,

said: "We are disappointed, but that's the luck of penalty shoot-outs. I'm proud of my players, who showed what a good all-round outfit they are. We have got stronger in each of the games we've played against league opposition and proved a match for them."

Chesterfield, who reached the FA Cup semi-finals last season, made an early exit this time with a 2-0 home defeat against Grimsby Town in their second-round replay. A goal from Jack Lester in the 22nd minute and another 11 minutes from time from Paul Groves eliminated Chesterfield, who had recovered from two goals down at Blundell Park to earn the replay. Grimsby now entertain Norwich City, of the first division side, in the third round.

The class of Cheltenham, the Vauxhall Conference club, finally told over Boreham Wood, from the Ryman

League. Bob Bloomer put the visitors ahead in the 42nd minute and Jimmy Smith finished the job in the 68th to take Cheltenham through to a home tie against Reading.

Steve Cottrell, the Cheltenham manager, said: "We didn't play particularly well in the first game and we didn't play that well today, but we put in a thoroughly professional performance and it's fantastic to reach this far."

Bob Makin, the Boreham Wood manager, said: "I'm absolutely devastated with that performance because my whole team did not perform."

Two extra-time goals from the Walsford teenager, Gifton Noel-Williams, ended Torquay's hopes of a second consecutive cup win over second division opposition after their defeat of Luton Town in the first round. Noel-Williams broke the deadlock at Vicarage Road when he scored just seconds into the additional 30 minutes and then he scored again in the 108th minute. In between, Gary Clayton scored for Torquay. Walsford are at home to Sheffield Wednesday in the third round.

Kevin Hodges, the Torquay head coach, said: "I could not have asked more from my team. They showed tremendous character."

A nineteenth-minute equaliser for Preston from Dave Moyes and a winner from David Eyres six minutes into extra-time broke the hearts of Notts County, the third division pace-setters, at Meadow Lane. Sean Farrell's 51st-minute goal seemed to have put County through against their second division opponents and given them a chance to embarrass first division opposition at home to Stockport County.

Hereford United beat Colchester 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at home. Steven Forbes put Colchester ahead, but Neil Grayson equalised within seconds. Hereford are at home to Tranmere Rovers in the next round.

Even if Wednesday agree terms with Hajduk, they could have to wait for up to a month before Sedloski can obtain a work permit.

□ Nigeria's Football Association announced yesterday that Bora Milutinovic, the former Mexico coach, has been chosen to lead the national side at the 1998 World Cup finals in France. The military government in Nigeria has given its approval to the choice and the contract is expected to be signed today.

## Sedloski transfer hangs in balance

SHEFFIELD Wednesday's hopes of finalising the transfer of Gogo Sedloski for £1.75 million from Hajduk Split have been dampened after the Macedonia international failed a medical yesterday. The news on Tuesday that Sedloski, 23, would face a delay in obtaining a work permit means that his debut for Wednesday looks further away than ever.

Ron Atkinson, the Wednesday manager, refused to confirm the extent of the problem, but said: "The X-rays have shown up something which could later give him some trouble. We will now have to renegotiate and restructure the deal because we want to safeguard our interests. I still want the player to join us, but we will have to look for an incentive scheme, like a pay-as-you-play type deal."

## Scots ask for Danish double

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

SCOTLAND are trying to arrange two matches against Denmark next March so that they can give as many players as possible the chance to impress before the World Cup finals.

The first-choice team is due to face the Danes, who have also qualified for France, on March 25, probably at Ibrox. Craig Brown, the manager, is also keen to arrange a B team match so that he can test his fringe players. The Danish football association has been approached, but is not expected to give its decision until the new year.

Scotland are due to face

Finland in April before probably embarking on a two-match trip to the United States the next month. Then they will settle into their French base in St Remy de Provence as Brown finalises his preparations for the opening match against Brazil, the World Cup holders, on June 10.

Meanwhile, Scotland's leading ten clubs confirmed yesterday that they will reject a new proposal from Bell's Scottish League first division teams in the dispute about a new premiership. It is understood that the first division sides, who

met at Love Street, the home of St Mirren, yesterday, will be campaigning for an immediate premiership of 12 clubs from next season before they give their blessing to the breakaway. They are also understood to be seeking compensation of a minimum £2.5 million each year for the next 20 years to be paid to the French League.

However, Lex Gold, the Hibernian chairman and spokesman for the premier division clubs, said: "Our position remains unchanged — we are driving forward towards establishing a new league at the end of this season."

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Hamed gets ready to land decisive blow in defence of his title



Warren, Hamed's promoter, poses with his boxer and with Hamed's opponent, Kelley, left, at a press conference at Madison Square Garden

## Angry Kelley eyes main chance

FROM SRIKUMAR SEN, BOXING CORRESPONDENT, IN NEW YORK

Over the past two weeks, O'Naseem Hamed has been selling himself with great success on television and radio here, but Kevin Kelley, his opponent tomorrow at Madison Square Garden, has been reluctant to talk. He claimed that he has been too busy training for this contest in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.

In fact, he is not inclined to help HBO, the television cable company that is backing Hamed, to sell the bout. In the Eighties, Kelley would promote his appearances by driving around New York handing out pencils with his name on them, sweets, cookies and T-shirts, but, on this occasion, he has refused to do even that.

The reason is simple. Although Kelley was a regular on HBO boxing presentations for many years, the company is paying big money to Hamed, who is little known in the United States and not to him. Hamed is receiving \$2 million (about £1.2 million) for this contest. Kelley just \$600,000.

While television stations are captivated by Hamed's showmanship and have

given him prime time coverage, the newspapers have not been over-generous to the Sheffield man. New York boxing writers are hard to please and are never too enamoured of Britons at the best of times. They are suspicious of hype and publicity and have preferred to listen to the complaints of their man.

Kelley surfaced on Tuesday at a face-to-face press conference at the Garden and, after engaging in a 20-minute shouting match in which no one could understand what he or Hamed was saying, he could not stop putting his point of view to journalists. He could not understand why a Brooklyn boxer should get second billing to a foreigner.

Seth Abraham, the head of HBO and the man backing the British boxer with a multimillion-dollar deal, had an answer for him, however. "I told Kevin: 'And God bless you if you beat him.' He will get the same commitment from HBO as Hamed is getting."

Lou Di Bella, the vice-president of HBO, went further: "This represents a great opportunity for Kevin," he said.

"He's a terrific, exciting HBO fighter. If he beats Hamed, he will move up to a level of popularity that he didn't have before. Kevin will benefit from the publicity that we've done for Hamed."

Yet that hurt Kelley even more. After all, having given years of loyal service to HBO, did it need a foreigner to make his cause deserving? Phil Borgia, his trainer, said: "Words are cheap. We heard such talk before, but we ain't seen HBO take the walk yet."

Kelley added: "Hamed didn't start all this — I did. I was the first to put the featherweights on the map after 25 years. That's why Hamed and Junior Jones and Kennedy McKinney and all the others are getting the kind of treatment that I should have got a long time ago. They are jumping the gun with this guy. They are putting too much into a man who is not known, who does not come from this city, even this country. People have thrown money at him like tuna fishes."

You can't blame Kelley for complaining. He has never had it easy. Despite

being the No 1 contender in 1991, he had to wait two years before he got his chance to fight for the title. He won the World Boxing Council championship in 1993, but lost it two years later after a severe beating from Alejandro Gonzales of Mexico. Kelley retired after that, came back six months later, but has never recaptured his old form.

Kelley came to England recently to see Hamed defend his World Boxing Organisation title against José Badillo and said all the right things in order to secure this contest — but now things have gone sour. "Hamed is not a pioneer," he said. "He has learnt showmanship from Muhammad Ali, but Ali did it with a smile. Hamed does it arrogantly. Guys in my neighbourhood keep telling me to beat his butt."

"My aunt, who is really a religious lady and doesn't speak bad about anybody, called me the other day and said: 'Kevin, I saw those commercials and he's so arrogant and so nasty. That's not God-like. You need to give him a beating. He needs it!'"

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## Treating chronic fatigue

Natural Birth Healers  
Channel 4, 8.00pm

The series on complementary medicine concludes by looking at what it can do for one of the more contentious diseases, chronic fatigue syndrome also known as ME. Although dismissed in some quarters as yuppie ill, this programme at least is prepared to take it seriously and nobody would suggest that Roy Haggerty is fibbing when he talks of a miserable three years of broken nights, blurred vision and debilitating lack of energy. His GP, Dr Peter May, is sceptical about alternative treatments but prepared to let Dr Julian Kenyon, who believes in them, take Haggerty under his wing. There is no instant miracle. May accuses Kenyon of "pulling wacky ideas out of the blue and remains unimpressed. But there is evidence to suggest that alternative methods may succeed where conventional ones have failed.

Was It Good For You?  
Channel 5, 8.00pm

The holiday programme visits Mexico in the company of three groups of Britons doing very different things. For Rachel, Christine and Eileen, nurses and a physio from a London hospital who have been backpacking for three months, Mexico is a chance to unwind and do nothing very much. Jon and Nick, friends from Leeds, give up their usual holiday pursuits of birds and barge in favour of scuba diving, while the Allingtons and their two sons take a coach tour in search of local culture. The series has more than a whiff of Channel 4's *Real Holiday Show*, except that it goes to one place at a time and sends the presenters along too. Indeed, what with camera crews tracking every move, and chirpy little Ailsa Greenhalgh popping up in the middle of everything, you wonder if the usual holiday blues are having a bit of a come-back.

Dover  
ITV, 8.30pm

The Channel port documentary has been short on high drama and unlike *Holiday Reps* it does not have regular characters to sustain the interest. One gathers, too, that legal constraints may have censored the more dramatic triumphs of HM Customs. The sniffer dogs have usually sniffed in



Les Godley shows his respect (ITV, 8.30pm)

vain. But there is a striking sequence in this latest episode as Dover comes to a halt in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales. It is the day of the funeral and bringing a busy port to a standstill to observe a minute's silence is a big operation. Port police form a guard of honour and staff and passengers bow their heads until a cannon shot signals that the minute is up. The arrival of a cruise liner, ironically called the *Royal Princess*, provides the other main surprise, given spice by luggage ending up in the sea.

Save Stories: Stalking the Ark  
BBC2, 9.25pm

The final programme in a bold series about environmentalism turns to the animal conservationists. The film reminds us that until about 30 years ago the Old Testament view that animals were there to be hunted, tamed and eaten had gone largely unchallenged. Then the conservation movement took off and its arguments became so persuasive that the "protection of species" became the new orthodoxy. The film pays tribute to the energy and persistence of conservationists' campaigns. But it does suggest that some of their darker predictions have been based on dubious evidence and that putting wildlife first has had adverse consequences for many ordinary people. Saving 5,000 Indian tigers may have been a laudable crusade, but it led to nearly one million peasants being evicted from their land.

Peter Waymark

## RADIO CHOICE

Thursday Afternoon Play: Clever As Paint  
Radio 4, 2.00pm

Readers who can spend time near a radio on weekday afternoons know of riches others can only dream about, and this slot on Thursdays often provides proof. *Clever As Paint* is a clever title for a play about the Pre-Raphaelites, the leading lights of the art world in mid-Victorian London. Kimi Morrissey's dramatisation is set at Christmas and focuses on three of the most famous of the movement's figures: Dame Gabriel Rossetti, Lizzie Siddal and William Morris. The tortured relationship between these three led to the suicide of Siddal in her twenties, after years of suffering over the infidelity of her husband, Rossetti, not least with Morris's wife, Pauline. The leads are played by Imogen Stubbs, Paul Rixys and Jonathan Cake.

## RADIO 1

6.30am Kevin Greening and Zoë Ball 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00 Jo Whiley, includes 12.20pm Newsbeat 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Dave 6.00 Radio 1 7.00 8.00 Evening Session with Steve Wright 9.00 Movie Update with Mark Kermode 4.45 John Peel 10.30 Anya Hindmarch 12.00 Blue Jam 1.00 Ross Clegg 1.00 Chris Moyles

## RADIO 2

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30 Wake Up to Wogan 9.30 Ken Bruce 11.30 Jimmy Young 1.30pm Debbie Thewer 3.00 Ed Stewart 5.05 John Dunn 7.00 David Morris' Country Club 8.00 Paul O'Grady 8.30 Saturday's Son 9.30 The Run-Around Show 10.00 News with David McNeil 12.00 Alfie 12.05 Steve Madden 5.00 Alex Lester

## RADIO 3 LIVE

6.00am The Breakfast Programme 8.00 David Meller 12.00 Midday with Mel 2.00pm Russel on Five 4.00 Nationwide with Julian Worricker 7.00 News Extra with David McNeil 7.30 Footfall on BBC1 and Radio 4 with David McNeil 8.00 The Saturday Show 8.30 Sportsman with Alan Byrd 8.30 Sportcast 16.00 Radio 3 11.00 News Extra with David McNeil 12.00 After Hours 2.00pm Up All Night with Richard Dally 5.00 Morning Reports

## RADIO 5 LIVE

5.00am Jeremy Clark 7.00 Chris Evans 16.00 (FM) Robin Banks (AM) Graham Dene 1.00pm (FM) Nick Abbot (FM) Nicky Home 4.00 Russ 7.00 (FM) Paul Coyle (AM) Calum Jones 10.00 Mark Forster 2.00pm Richard Porter

## VIRGIN RADIO

5.00am Jeremy Clark 7.00 Chris Evans 16.00 (FM) Robin Banks (AM) Graham Dene 1.00pm (FM) Nick Abbot (FM) Nicky Home 4.00 Russ 7.00 (FM) Paul Coyle (AM) Calum Jones 10.00 Mark Forster 2.00pm Richard Porter

## TALK RADIO

6.30am Paul Ross and Carol McGinn 8.00 Scott Chisholm 12.00 Lorraine Kelly 2.00pm Tommy Boyd 4.00 Peter Doherty 7.00 Anna Rawlinson 9.00 Janice White 11.00am Ian Collier

## RADIO 3

8.00am On Ali, with Stephanie Hughes, including Haydn (Mozart's G minor Rondo) and Haydn (Violin Sonata No 3 in D minor, Op 108); Grieg (How Far Thou Art, Op 74 No 1); Bartók (In C); Glazka (Overture Russian and Lucrines); 9.00 Morning Collection, with Peter Hobday; Dvořák (Sonata in D minor); Joaquin (Benedicta Es, Cetra Regnate); Britten (Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge); 10.00 Musical Encounters, with Rudolf (Trumpet Concerto in E flat); Beethoven (Piano, excerpts); Haydn (Symphony No 98 in D, Miracoli); Revel (Gavotte); 11.00 Niles (Black is the Colour); Levinson (Five Fingers); Shostakovich (Festival Overture); 12.00 Composer of the Week: Prokofiev

1.00pm The Choral Year, with Hugh Dennis, Andrew Clements and Michael O'Connor; including recordings conducted by Marc Minkowski; With Annick Massis in the principal soprano role; Boieldieu's La Dame Blanche and Rossini's L'Ingrata, Faust; Puccini's La Sonnambula, conducted by Zdenek Zelenka; 2.00pm The BBC Orchestra, Wagner (Overture Die Meistersinger), under Andrew Davis; Hindemith (Symphony No 5); Shostakovich (Overture to a Comic Opera); 4.00pm Ensemble, Penny Gore introduces a recital by Lorraine McAslan, violin, and Nigel Clayton, piano; Suk (Four Pieces); Saint-Saëns (Violin Sonata No 1 in D minor); 5.00pm Concerts (1) 6.00 Mark Grimes

## RADIO 4

5.55am Shipping Forecast 6.00 News Briefing 6.10 Farming Today 6.25 Prayers for the Day 6.30 Today 10.30 Year in Parliament 4.00 Weather 9.00 News 10.00 Michael Buerk 11.00 John Peel 12.00 Newsdesk 1.00 World Business Report 2.00 Sports Roundup 3.00 Outlook 3.15 John Peel 12.00 Newsdesk 12.30am Wednesday 12.45 Britain Today 1.00 Newsdesk 1.30 Composer of the Month 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Focus on Earth 3.00 News 3.05 World Business Report 3.15 Sport 3.30 Assignment 4.00 Newsdesk 4.00 Europe Today 5.00 Newsdesk 5.30 Europe Today

## CLASSIC FM

6.00am Alan Mann, including Trumpet, Alarm Call and Broadway 7.00 Harry, Judy, Michael and Brian's Classical Music Show 8.00 Newsdesk 9.00 News in German (56 min) 10.05 World Business Report 9.15 Sense and Sensibilities 9.30 8.00 English: World Business Report 9.45 Sports Roundup 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 Discovery 11.00 Newsdesk 11.20 Children in Conversation 11.45 From Our Correspondent 12.00 News 12.25pm World Business Report 12.15 British Today 12.30am Richard 7.00 Sports Roundup 1.00 News 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Outlook 3.00 Weather 3.30 News in German (56 min) 3.30 Sports Roundup 3.45 Westway 3.50 Vintage Chart Show 4.00 News 4.15 Record News 4.30 World Today, News in German (56 min) 4.45 British Today 5.00 Europe Today 5.30 World Business Report 5.45 Sports Roundup 6.00 Newsdesk 6.30 Assignment 6.45 News 6.55 Newsdesk 7.00 World Business Report 7.15 Newsdesk 7.30 Weather 7.45 Newsdesk 8.00 Newsdesk 8.30 Newsdesk 9.00 Newsdesk 9.30 Newsdesk 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 World Business Report 10.45 Newsdesk 11.00 Newsdesk 11.30 John Peel 12.00 Newsdesk 12.30am Wednesday 12.45 Britain Today 1.00 Newsdesk 1.30 Composer of the Month 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Focus on Earth 3.00 News 3.05 World Business Report 3.15 Sport 3.30 Assignment 4.00 Newsdesk 4.00 Europe Today 5.00 Newsdesk 5.30 Europe Today

## WORLD SERVICE

6.00am Newday 6.30 Meridian Books 7.00 News 7.15 On the Shelf: The Glass is Singing 7.30 Composer of the Month 7.00 News 8.10 8.30 Newsdesk 9.00 News in German (56 min) 9.05 World Business Report 9.15 Sense and Sensibilities 9.30 8.00 English: World Business Report 9.45 Sports Roundup 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 Discovery 11.00 Newsdesk 11.20 Children in Conversation 11.45 From Our Correspondent 12.00 News 12.25pm World Business Report 12.15 British Today 12.30am Richard 7.00 Sports Roundup 1.00 News 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Outlook 3.00 Weather 3.30 News in German (56 min) 3.30 Sports Roundup 3.45 Westway 3.50 Vintage Chart Show 4.00 News 4.15 Record News 4.30 World Today, News in German (56 min) 4.45 British Today 5.00 Europe Today 5.30 World Business Report 5.45 Sports Roundup 6.00 Newsdesk 6.30 Assignment 6.45 News 6.55 Newsdesk 7.00 World Business Report 7.15 Newsdesk 7.30 Weather 7.45 Newsdesk 8.00 Newsdesk 8.30 Newsdesk 9.00 Newsdesk 9.30 Newsdesk 10.00 Newsdesk 10.30 World Business Report 10.45 Newsdesk 11.00 Newsdesk 11.30 John Peel 12.00 Newsdesk 12.30am Wednesday 12.45 Britain Today 1.00 Newsdesk 1.30 Composer of the Month 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 Focus on Earth 3.00 News 3.05 World Business Report 3.15 Sport 3.30 Assignment 4.00 Newsdesk 4.00 Europe Today 5.00 Newsdesk 5.30 Europe Today

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# The end of the queue is forming a queue

Maybe you, too, had assumed that "hardcore Prommer" was a service you might read about in a Soho telephone kiosk until you saw last night's *Modern Times* (BBC2). It was about the fervent posse of men and women who make the annual Promenade Concerts the pivot on which the rest of their lives tilt. Often quite precariously.

It is not the concerts, exactly, that grip them. It is the queuing for specific positions in the arena of the Albert Hall, positions they have always had. And always intend to. When Sartre wrote about existential engagement, it's hard to imagine he ever thought it might mean the Prom queue.

And you can forget all about music soothing a savage breast. If these music-lovers are anything to go by, it can make you a lot more savage. These are people who might be conscientious objectors in a war against Hitler, but will roll

up their sleeves and spit on their queue if anyone tries to jump the queue. "Some banger tried to overtake me!" said Sue Brady, snorting like an angry bull.

You don't know Sue? Oh, you must meet her. "Like many regular season-ticket holders," said the narrator, inserting the first of many blades, all as defty as a matador, "Sue Brady is retired and unmarried. She's the uncrowned queen of the Proms, with an entourage to prove it. They're known as the Brady Bunch."

Sue even holds her birthday party in the queue: champagne, cake, the lot. Sue recently went caravanning in Belgium with Tim, whom she met in the queue ten years ago. John Underwood, who puts together a Prommers' orchestra and who spends 12 hours in the queue every day, met Sue in the queue last year. They have been a couple ever since. We saw them exchange rings as fellow queuers

drank champagne to toast their plan to marry when Sue has finished her studies. Face it: if you find another human being who also enjoys queuing for 12 hours a day just to secure a particular spot in the arena rather than another spot which may be only two yards away, then that's not the sort of compatibility you toss aside lightly. Or, as John put it, "The problem with the Proms is actually going to all these concerts. If we didn't have to go to all these concerts the season would be better." Then he tucked into a chicken leg off the barbecue.

Did I mention the barbecues? Oh yes, there's full-in queue catering. Sauces, grilled sardines, squeeze of lemon, salads, wine glasses, claret, espresso brewed on Calor-Gaz burners. The hot dog stands that lurk in the shadow of the Albert Memorial don't get much custom

## REVIEW



Joe Joseph

from the Brady Bunch. For the sake of accuracy, we should mention that John isn't actually included yet in the Brady Bunch barbecues. He's still a bit "nouveau" for the *ancien régime*, having been a 12-hours-a-day queuer for only four years. Not enough pedigree, frankly.

Of course, Helen Richards's film

was all hugely entertaining in the uncomfortable way that visiting

Bedlam must have been entertaining. We laughed at the inmates, shook our heads at their inanities, and they never once twiggled we were here to mock. To them, what they do is normal behaviour.

We, who happen not to be "retired and unmarried", who cannot imagine having either the time or the desire to spend 12 hours a day queuing, gaze on these people with the pity we might feel for those who measure out their lives in coffee spoons. There but for the grace of God, etc. I felt rather shabby and slightly guilty by the end of it, as if I'd just opened and read someone else's personal mail.

But at least Richards didn't have to hump her cameras from one end of the world to the other as Mike Richards (any relation?) had to do for last night's *Wildlife Special* (BBC1) on the eagle. Eagles are everywhere, but my vote goes to the golden eagles which survive in the mountains of Greece by scoop-

ing up tortoises in their claws like bowling balls, and then dropping them like bombs to crack open their shell. Maybe that tall story about Aeschylus dying as a result of a tortoise falling on his head isn't pure fable after all.

Yet, for a bird of prey, the eagle turned out to be quite placid. One mother in Africa returned to its nest to find that her three-day-old chick, feeling peckish, had started to eat its freshly-born sibling. She didn't even scold the child. Queue-jumping Prommers have probably been castrated for less.

As usual it all took David Attenborough's breath away. "Few birds," he whispered sweetly, "have captured the human imagination quite so powerfully as the eagle." Well, David, you're never met that bird Marilyn Monroe.

John F. Kennedy, of course, did, as we heard yet again in *Secret*

## BBC1

6.00am *Business Breakfast* (1949)

7.00 BBC Breakfast News (T) (14857)

9.00 *Good Living* (102950)

9.25 *Style Challenge* The experts treat pantomime stars Widow Twankey and Aladdin to a makeover (1015857)

9.30 *Kilroy* (T) (2753147)

10.30 *Can't Cook, Won't Cook* (T) (1523012)

10.55 *The Really Useful Show* (5522586)

11.35 *Change That* (3748437)

12.00 *News* (T) and weather (6282944)

12.05pm *Clue My Bluff* (2473437)

12.35 *Give Us A Clue* (516925)

1.00 *News* (T) and weather (17944)

1.30 *Regional News* (1721518)

1.40 *The Weather Show* (8611925)

1.45 *Neighbours* (T) (845321)

2.10 *Patricia* (T) (1817470)

3.00 *Vets In Practice* (T) (T) (5437)

3.30 *Pingu* (6033215) 3.35 *Playdays* (7571505) 3.50 *The Silver Brumby* (757321) 4.20 *Mr Wim* (7582418) 4.30 *Smart, The National Portrait Competition*; how to bring a mechanical character to life. Last in series (2457406) 5.00 *Newsround* (T) (4781875) 5.10 *Aquila* (T) (6161383)

5.35 *Neighbours* (T) (845321)

6.00 *News* (T) and weather (505)

6.30 *Regional News* (557)

7.00 *Watchdog* with Anne Robinson (T) (7418)

7.30 *EastEnders* Cindy faces a showdown; Mark plans a trip out with Jessie (T) (741)

8.00 *Animal Hospital* Hemsworth's Chief Vet, David Grant, talks to Rolf Harris about his 30-year career dedicated to helping sick and injured animals and the despair he often feels when faced with cruelty cases (T) (61865)

8.30 *Holiday Reps* The season draws to a close along with Caroline's relationship; but others have better news. Last in series (T) (5673)

9.00 *News* (T) and weather (4925)

9.30 *The Thin Blue Line: Yuletide Spirit* Ginn tracks down some criminal card singers, and Fowler falls victim to the ruthless Gasform Amateur Dramatic Society (T) (T) (50215)

10.00 *They Think It's All Over* Olympic athlete Ivan Thomas and comedian Jeff Green join regulars David Gower, Gary Linaker, Phil Jupitus and Rony McGrath and chairman Nick Hancock (74166)

10.30 *Clyde Anderson All Talk* with Andie MacDowell and Harry Enfield (T) (50588)

11.00 *Question Time* David Dimbleby's guests are Baroness Shirley Williams, Germaine Greer and the MPs Chris Smith and Michael Heseltine (T) (804498)

12.05am *Jelbirds* (1991) Comedy adventure, starring Dyan Cannon, Phylicia Rashad and Dakin Matthews. Two women from vastly different backgrounds become close friends during a spell behind bars. Handcuffed together, they manage to escape from the clutches of the law. Directed by Burt Brinckerhoff (T) (5021074)

1.35 *Weather* (7162033)

1.40 *BBC News* 24

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## BBC2

6.00am *Science Cosmology on Trial* (63708) 6.30 *Food — Whose Choice is it Anyway?* (53587)

7.00 *See Hear Breakfast News* (T) and signing) (2042234)

7.15 *Telebabs* (T) (223234) 7.40 *Yucky Duck* (T) (6895295) 8.05 *Blue Peter* (T) (688012) 8.30 *Mouse and Friends* (T) (6982383) 8.35 *Johnson and Friends* (T) (698215) 8.45 *The Record* (8646352)

9.10 *The Fugitive* (T) (1695234) 10.00 *Telebabs* (20627)

10.30 *Make Mine Mink* (1960) Star-studded comedy with Terry Thomas, Billie Whitelaw and Kenneth Williams. Directed by Robert Asher (8575055)

12.10pm *Birds with Tony Soper* (8895873)

12.30 *Working Lunch* (91321) 1.00 *Joshua Jones* (T) (6031054) 1.10 *Hammer It Home* (7347047) 1.30 *A River Somewhere*: Fly fishing on the Chamberlain River in Western Australia (9092) 2.00 *Take a Meal: Alsace* (9252050) 2.15 *Going, Going, Gone* (4595598) 2.40 *News* (T) (245) 2.45 *Westminster* (T) (5768031) 3.25 *News* (T) (73301) 3.50 *Vanessa* (4687437)

3.20 *News* (T) (6113055)

3.25 *Regional News* (T) (756398)

3.30 *Potamus Park* (2090505) 3.40 *Wizadora's Christmas Carol* (804147)

3.50 *Scoby Dooby Do* (1558128) 4.20 *It's a Tiny Toot Christmas* (7505166) 4.40 *Out of Sight* (1476532)

5.10 *A Country Practice* (9134321)

5.40 *News* (T) and weather (471429)

6.00 *Home and Away* (T) (673)

6.30 *Regional News* (925)

7.00 *Emmerdale* Kim's harasser gets more persistent. Doug has disappointing news for Kathy (T) (2586)

7.30 *Silent Running* (1971) Ecological sci-fi fable with Bruce Dern. Directed by Douglas Trumbull (T) (64437)

7.30 *First Sight: Home Alone* Former homeless people reveal how securing a roof over their head does not necessarily unlock the door to a happier life (T) (383)

WALES: *Decisive Weapons EAST*: Master of Fazi MIDLANDS: Midlands Report NORTH/NORTH EAST/NORTH WEST/SOUTH WEST/WEST: Close Up SOUTH: Southern Eye

8.00 *Decisive Weapons: The Queen of Tanks — the Russian Tsar* (T) (4708)

WALES: *Play Notes* on Common Ground

8.30 *Top Gear* Jeremy Clarkson, Tiff Needell and Quentin Wilson pick the best cars of 1997 (T) (3215)

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## RUGBY LEAGUE 42

Sheldon leads new challenge for Northern soul

# SPORT

THURSDAY DECEMBER 18 1997

Spanish tests for Villa and Chelsea

## United happy with royal appointment

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

THEY have the backing of the royal family, a team that is on the brink of a French league record for excellence and a stadium fit for kings, but when the draw for the quarter-finals of the European Cup paired Manchester United with AS Monaco yesterday, Alex Ferguson and his players breathed a collective sigh of relief that they had not been matched with any of the true aristocracy of European football.

As Aston Villa swallowed hard after the news that they will have to overcome Atlético Madrid to reach the semi-finals of the Uefa Cup and Chelsea stayed steadfastly ambiguous about their meeting with Real Betis, of Seville, for a place in the last four of the Cup Winners' Cup, United went as far as any sensible club is prepared to go before a crucial match: they were cautiously optimistic.

Monaco are hardly likely to be whipping boys. They finished at the top of a modest group F in the Champions' League, ahead of Sporting Lisbon, Lierse and Bayer Leverkusen, who also qualified as one of the best runners-up. Just as important, though, they lead the French league and will equal a 13-year-old record if they win.

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"You have to respect a team that won its domestic league so crushingly last season and there is no easy draw at this stage of the competition, but I admit there are a couple of tough ties out there. I'm thinking, in particular, of the Dynamo-Kiev-Juventus one."

If United could afford to look ahead, Brian Little, the Villa manager, was not allowing himself that luxury. His obtuse side has already confounded the sceptics by outlasting Bordeaux, Steaua Bucarest and another Spanish side, Athletic Bilbao, but this match, against the conquerors of Leicester City, will be their toughest test so far.

Atlético Madrid, still labouring in the giant shadows cast by Barcelona and Real Madrid, put nine goals past the PAOK Salonica side that eliminated Arsenal from the competition. Formidable in attack, they have players such as Christian Vieri, the Italy forward, and the prodigiously-gifted Juninho. "We know it will be an extremely tough game," Little said. "They were one of the favourites from the beginning of the competition and we will have a healthy respect for them."

Like Ferguson, though, Little drew solace from the fact that Villa had been drawn away first. The same happy fate befell Chelsea. Betis are one of the better teams left in a competition that has been devalued by the Champions' League decision to take the top two teams from the championships of leading countries.

Betis, whose leading player



No 1280

**ACROSS**  
 1 Suddenly appear (3,2); book for infants (3-2)  
 2 Skilled worker (onec) (7)  
 3 Doughty (7)  
 4 Popeye's magic veg (7)  
 5 Path out of one's way (6)  
 6 (Violin) plucked (9)  
 7 A reptile; file of children (9)  
 8 Friedrich —, worked with Marx (6)  
 9 Morning prayer (7)  
 10 One running and jumping (7)  
 11 One with black/white patterns (7)  
 12 Invigorate (3,2)  
**DOWN**  
 1 Laid with stones (5)  
**SOLUTION TO NO 1279**  
**ACROSS:** 1 Dove tail 5 Swap 9 Fall into place 10 Pang 11 Nineveh 13 Lustre 15 Kaiser 18 Picasso 20 Cool 23 Heiter-skelter 24 Dirk 25 Criteria  
**DOWN:** 1 Daft 2 Volga 3 Trigger 4 Intone 6 Wharves 7 Plectra 8 Span 12 Slipshod 14 Secular 16 Ancient 17 Mouser 19 Slew 21 Outer 22 Asia

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Seizinger looks totally focused as she sweeps downhill at Val d'Isere on her way to her fifth victory of the season in a speed event

## Seizinger stretches her lead downhill

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

KATJA SEIZINGER confirmed that she was in a class of her own when she won a women's downhill at Val d'Isere, France, yesterday, her fifth consecutive victory in a speed event this season. The 25-year-old German trailed Ingiborg Marken, of Norway, by 0.02sec after the first leg, but was unbeatable in the second.

With a combined time of 2min 1.82sec, Seizinger, the leader in the World Cup competition, beat Hilde Gerg, her compatriot, by 0.49sec. Marken finished in third place, her best in a downhill,

0.62sec behind the winner. Seizinger, the Olympic downhill champion, has won every speed event so far this season, building up an impressive lead in the World Cup standings. Seizinger has 643 points, 214 more than Gerg, in second place on 429.

"I prefer to concentrate on each race and see what happens," Seizinger said. "I can't really say where all this is leading to. Today I also had a lot of luck, the race was surely not the most fair."

Seizinger said she takes

fewer risks than other competitors. "I ski by instinct," she said. "My coaches say I can go faster, I am not doing 100 per cent. It's not intentional."

Her rival would not have been encouraged to hear her add: "Iabor this type of race. I prefer the downhill from top to bottom. Here the bottom is pretty easy and you have to do the same elements twice."

The German has a chance to leave her rivals further behind today in the third super-giant slalom of the

season. Her win yesterday, in the third downhill of the season, was her fifteenth in a downhill and the 33rd in her career, making her the third-most successful skier, with Hanni Wenzel, of

Lichtenstein.

The race was held in a

leg on a shortened Orelle-Killy piste after strong winds twice halted the morning run.

Poor weather has hampered the start of the European season. Two women's events were postponed here last week and the races due to

## English clubs ready for drastic action over cup

By DAVID HANDS  
 RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

ENGLISH club representatives will go into European Rugby Cup board meeting tomorrow prepared to withdraw from the Heineken Cup next season unless the existing structure is changed. They seek a tournament based on merit, with greater financial rewards for success, and believe that their opinions are shared by France.

The meeting in Dublin comes on the eve of this season's cup semi-finals, in which Bath seek to prevent a French monopoly on Saturday by beating Pau, while, on Sunday, Toulouse meet Brive, the holders, in a match that attracted 60,000 applicants for tickets to the municipal stadium, where the capacity is only 27,000.

"English clubs are not prepared to enter the European competition next season if it retains the same structure, with the same rewards," David Tyler, representing the English Rugby Partnership (ERP), said. "They feel they have allies in the French clubs, who are happy with the structure but less happy with the rewards."

The tournament, now in its third year, has grown significantly in size and payments to clubs since Brive's success against Leicester last January. However, there is mounting unhappiness about its placement in the season — Andy Robinson, the Bath director of coaching, called yesterday for it to be played after Christmas to encourage the growth of a sustained domestic league programme before the holiday period — and the uneven quality of play.

English club representatives firmly deny that they seek an exclusive Anglo-

clubs each from France, England and Wales, but one English official said: "We are worried that the Scots and Irish are using this as their basic competition, because they don't have teams of sufficient quality to play domestic rugby at the top level."

The Scots have addressed the problem by re-inventing their district teams as club organisations and have gone further by establishing elite development squads. Glasgow, for example, will send a development party to New Zealand next summer, where as in England it is the premiership clubs who have taken up the development banner, through recently-instituted academies of youth.

The clubs have done England a gigantic favour since they have, in effect, 12 divisional teams," Bob Dwyer, the Leicester director of rugby, said. "We need to make sure we don't have too many clubs in one area [hence the so-called super-club strategy that is one of the fashionable theories being aired]; but there is nothing to suggest that a Rugby Football Union-appointed administration in the regions would do the job better than what is being done already."

The RFU haven't even got an elite development policy which fledgling countries — I mean New Zealand and Australia — have put in place." Some ERC directors will argue that the competition must be given time to develop, though it is possible that tomorrow's discussion will consider qualifying tournaments, such as the recently-mooted Celtic Cup involving teams from Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

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as raid  
 gets war  
 crimes  
 suspects